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PREFACE

THE short papers contained in this volume will be recognised by many into whose hands they will come as memorials of occasions when we have with our friends been partakers of the same spiritual meat. Their analogue in the Gospel is the fragments of blessed bread left over from satisfied lips, only with this contrast, that, instead of twelve baskets marvellously full, we have one tiny basket with twelve little pieces of bread in it. I hope, however, that it will be found that these fragments, like the consecrated wafers in the Eastern ritual, are marked with the sign of the Cross and with the legend that "Jesus Christ conquers." We speak of suffering made holy, of sorrow made sweet, and of victory

made real; but have no other Gospel for our own needs or for the needs of the world than the grace of God in Jesus Christ. But this Gospel, however enigmatic it may seem to the carnal mind, is sufficient to make saints and to enable them to take their kingdom.

J. RENDEL HARRIS.

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I

THE GLORY OF THE BRIDEGROOM

"*This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.*"—JOHN ii. 11.

I

THE GLORY OF THE BRIDEGROOM

IT would scarcely be divined by a person who should have presented to him the mass of evangelic traditions which constitute the sources of the Gospels as we know them, that the miracle which St. John relates in his second chapter occupied the front rank in time or in intensity, so that it should be called the initial sign or beginning of miracles. It is likely that if we were left to imagine to which of Christ's works of power such pre-eminence belonged, we might select an occasion like that of the raising of Lazarus, and say of it, "This must be the beginning, the prince of miracles, which Jesus did in Bethany of Judea, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him." But there is no word in connection with the marriage at Cana that, on the surface, presents

such dogmatic truth and affords such inspiration of faith as the great sentence, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Compared with this august saying, believing which an emancipated spirit may step out with confidence into an unseen world, the conversation at Cana seems at first sight to rise scarcely above the level of triviality. How does it come to pass that this occasion, as truly as the scene at Bethany, was one when men should see glory manifested, and believe?

The answer to such inquiries can only be in the conclusion that the banquet, and the miracle, and the sayings of our Lord and of those who were gathered with Him, were instinct with mystical significance. We need not be surprised that such was apprehended to be the case by St. John, to whom the whole world and all that went on in it was replete with meanings not discernible on the surface, so that he saw everywhere the allegory of a Divine teaching, and the evidence of a Divine life, and read all the ordinary writing of God's finger in the laws of life and its daily motions as a kind of sacred cipher, the key to which had been confided to

him by the Spirit of truth. The man had not been long with Christ before he left off eating the common bread of life, and betook himself to that hidden manna of which the outer nourishment is only the symbol. He became a child again, but in a larger house. By-and-by, after having played with the flowered hem of God's vesture in this world, he pricked the perfections of Jesus into paper with a pin, and we have the Fourth Gospel—the Gospel which is not Synoptic but Dioptic, which tells so many things which he saw alone, below the surface, in distinction from the things which the other Evangelists saw together, and upon the surface. The Fourth Gospel is the mystics' own Gospel. So we must not be surprised that St. John attaches especial importance to the ordinary event and the not very striking conversation that accompanied it.

We observe, in the first place, that the occasion was one on which the Church added audibly the second term to the Trisagion, and began to say, what becomes from that time an ever-increasing volume of sound, spreading from one believing soul to another, the words, " Glory be

to the Son." The whole life of Christ is a kind of evolution of the Trisagion: I mean that His days on earth furnish an illustration of the "Glory to the Father," of the "Glory to the Son," and of the "Glory to the Holy Ghost." The angels at His birth proclaim the "Glory to the Father"; the marriage at Cana marks the beginning of the "Glory to the Son"; and the day of Pentecost, with the teaching about it, and the promises that ensured it, mark the point when the "Glory to the Holy Spirit" was sounded by human lips and in human hearts. So that, if we follow the analogy suggested by the birthday of our Lord and by the day of Pentecost, we should interpret St. John as saying that the marriage day at Cana was a great and notable day of the Lord. But we must admit that we have not been in the habit of regarding it as such. Perhaps that is on account of our habit of estimating the situations in the Gospel by reference to the relative grandeur of the miracles which took place, instead of looking at the life of Christ from the standpoint of St. John, who sums up his observations of Christ's life in general, and

of all the incidents of it, not in the words, "We beheld His miracles," but in the infinitely deeper terms, "We beheld His glory." As a matter of fact, all Christ's miracles are of the same compass, and the occasion which we are studying does not derive its importance very much from the quality or quantity of the wine which was made by our Lord. Its significance lies in the revelation of His person rather than in the record of His work. He manifested His glory.

So we begin to see that the marriage at Cana was an important day; we begin to felicitate the bridegroom and the bride, anonymous but greatly graced, and to wish that we had been invited to the celebration. But if we have this feeling, we may be sure that, if there is a mystical interpretation of the scene, *we are invited.* When it comes to such a large matter as the teaching of Christ to the Church and His ministry to the world and to His own who are in the world, we are not dealing with any transitory festival, but with the kingdom of God itself; and we are, therefore, entitled to say of ourselves with reference to the deeper truths

which underlie the story, what St. John says of the immediate circle, "Both Jesus was called and His disciples to the marriage." Here, as elsewhere, "they were called" means "we are called." The truths which they came together to learn, which made Cana of Galilee a Divinity School of the inward life, are truths which we learn with them. Their communications of grace are ours also; and the mystical body of Christ is so truly one, not only at any given time, but at all time, that one who is a disciple indeed is, if one may say so, all disciples in one. He has left nets with the Zebedees, and custom-houses with St. Matthew; his tears have flowed into the channel of the Magdalene's, and so have reached the sacred feet of our Lord; and his head is with St. John's on the bosom of everlasting Love; he is in all crosses and pains of saints that suffer, and partakes of all glories, and wears all crowns; for the life of Christ makes him one with all manifestations of Christ's life, both suffering and triumphant, that ever have been or ever will be. There is something communicated to the true believer which makes him under-

stand the words, "Yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Those early Fathers were not so unreasonable who spoke of the Church as existing before the sun and moon. The body of Christ is something more than a fortuitous concourse of redeemed atoms. He that hath the life hath the Son; there is nothing fortuitous, or atomic, or transitory about that.

What then is the calling wherewith the disciples are called to the feast, the universal calling of which we have been speculating? It must be an invitation to a knowledge of the life of God in the Son: and such a knowledge is, first, produced by a word addressed to faith, "There standeth One amongst you whom ye know not"; secondly, expressed by a word from an enlightened experience, "There standeth One amongst us whom we know." "And this is life eternal, to know Thee and the Christ whom Thou hast sent."

Our Lord Christ began His service in the little world of the Galilean and Judean ministrations, by being on that small stage what God is in the universe—an anonymous, or unknown, or hardly known being. He came to Cana,

perhaps as a stranger, possibly as a poor relation, for it was an occasion when poor relations are in order; it does not appear that He was asked to repeat even a holy word over the feast, for another was appointed master of the feast. The bridegroom and the bride wore their festal crowns; as for Him, while He was in this world, He discarded His aureole, or only wore it on rare days and in retreat, as at the Transfiguration. You might have come to the feast, and marked all the notables, from near and far; He would not be of them: this one is the bridegroom of the day, and this the bride; this the bride's father or mother, and this the ruler of the feast: and this an anonymous Stranger, one of the Nazareth party; we have not seen Him in these parts before.

The action of the drama consists in making this anonymous Person central; in changing the head of the table; or, as St. John puts it, in "manifesting the glory of the Son."

A little space of time, a few brief and oracular speeches, with action to match, and then there is a new Feast-master at the board. "For

who," says Philo, "can pour over the blessed and happy soul the libations of true joy, except it be the Cup-bearer, the Master of the Feast, the Word?" And now it is the old feast-master who has become anonymous; and who would, indeed, be altogether forgotten if it had not been that the Stranger had taken over his office and borrowed his title.

One that entered the house and saw the rejoicing might say to his neighbour, "Behold the bridegroom!" Attention is naturally drawn that way; felicitation finds its obvious centre in the joy that was before them, in the persons of those for whose sake they had come together. But these who came to the feast like substance depart like shadows, when there has begun to stir in the heart of the disciples the whisper of a new Bridegroom that was amongst them, or of a new Bride. Their places became vacant, their crowns were fading, and their cups were empty. They owed it to Christ that they ever passed into history; and when they do pass, they are become anonymous, while their stray Guest has acquired a name that is above every name. Behold the Bridegroom!

This, then, is the action of that day's drama, and this is also the action of the drama of the spiritual life generally, to make the Anonymous appear amongst us, and to make us become anonymous except in Him and for Him. One of the surprises that God treats us to in the course of our life, which will no doubt be also the overwhelming surprise of our first review of this life from the vantage-ground of a larger and better, consists in the disclosure of the way in which our anonymous Lover has been besetting us behind and before, and laying His hand upon us. How many constraints that make for salvation have never been registered in the consciousness or printed off on the memory! how many times there are when qualification for duty is given concerning which we shall by-and-by hear the voice saying, "I girded thee, though thou didst not know Me"!

"There is nothing," says M. Sabatier, in his recent *Life of St. Francis*, "that corresponds to piety like love"; and the service of love, especially the earlier service, is often anonymous.

Readers of Cowper's *Memoirs* will remember the way in which Theodora, his cousin, pursued him through life with gift and remembrance and token that came he knew not from whence. At one time it was a snuff-box of tortoiseshell with a familiar landscape on the lid, and the portrait of his three hares; at another it was a seasonable gift of money; and tradition tells that upon one occasion, when these nameless tokens reached him, he remarked, "Dear Anonymous is come again; God bless *him*." It is difficult to understand how a poet could have been so blind as not to know that such nameless and appropriate gifts never come except from God, and from good women. But even when we lay the charge of want of insight at the poet's door, we are checked by One who says, "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known Me? Have I never looked in at thy window, or left gift at thy door?" Yet oftentimes the expression of the conscious heart has never been raised so high as even to the "Dear Anonymous" of the poet. It is a part of God's loving way with us that His criticism of our blindness

towards Him is a gradual revelation ; He can always make us ashamed when He wants to.

We pass to another consideration : the revelation of the glory of the Son is not limited to the knowledge of the fact of His being, and of His presence in the midst ; it is a knowledge of the way in which He works, and an imitation of the same. At Cana of Galilee He was pleased to add to the world's joy ; He took compassion upon people whose cups were empty or half empty, and the more compassion, perhaps, because they were acting as if the cups were not empty. He made up that which lacked, and looked into the faces of the guests and said, "Lacked ye anything?" and every one could have answered, "Nothing, Lord, nothing!"

Hard by, on a neighbouring hillside, is a second town, otherwise, but for His presence, little known, where He occupied Himself in subtracting from the world's pain ; from Nain to Cana is a very short journey geographically : how far is it in every-day life? When there is a wedding in one street, there is always a funeral in the next. Christ attends both,

because to add to the world's joy and to subtract from its pain are the alternating currents of the Eternal Love; and it is in these ministries, which belong to one sacred Person, who is equally at home in either, because eternally occupied in both, that we see the glory of the Son, who would not tell us by precept to rejoice with them that do rejoice and to weep with them that weep, unless He had furnished the perfect example that corresponds to the perfect precept. Nevertheless, we do not chiefly, and certainly not only, call Him the Man of Sorrows, for His highest title is the Master of the Feast, the Bridegroom.

II

THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE BRIDE

"*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*"—REV. xxi. 1-4.

II

THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE BRIDE

I SUPPOSE, beloved, there is not anybody who has a message that is worth listening to in the world whose message is not concerned in some way or other with the passing away of the former things. Whether we are dealing with social reforms and political reforms, or whether we are dealing with those deeper reforms which concern the inmost of human life and thought, the same kind of problem is presented to us: the problem of getting rid of the dead past. When we are speaking to people who are in sin, and trying to persuade them of what their duty is in the matter of repentance and faith, we do it remembering that they have got a long history behind them which has been a displeasing history to God and a displeasing life to man, and that such a record is under

condemnation, and that God does not mean it to stay; and that the sooner they apprehend that fact solidly, and set themselves according to it, and become properly adjusted with regard to the promises of God and to the power of God, so much the better is it for them.

But all the great movements of the soul turn upon the same conviction, that our state by nature is not the final state. Neither is the natural joy the final joy; but God has laid up for us better things—things of which he speaks as passing the understanding of man to conceive how good they are; and one of the wonders of the kingdom of heaven is that you can have a large proportion of those things in this life. Let us have done with "postponed heavens." We want to understand how much of God is to be known in this life, and how much of the joy of God is to be known in this world. Such an understanding and such an experience is the only reasonable preparation for the life and blessedness of the world to come.

I would be a Secularist on the non-Christian plan, if it were not that, happily, I am a Secu-

larist already on the Christian plan. I understand that a great many of those people who say that this life is the right stage on which to see recovered good and banished evil are preaching the true Gospel, and that it is the Gospel of the New Testament. Now, of course, we apply this first of all to the individual, and we begin with the individual because we understand that that is God's way of dealing with the world. There is no gospel which does not proclaim the regeneration of the individual. But he tells us also that there is going to be a restored social order. It is called "New Jerusalem." There is going to be a restored Church life, when the redeemed society and the purified Church will become one. We need that restoration very badly indeed, for there is a sorrowful spectacle in this world of half-converted Churches as well as of unconverted people. The Church of God is not made up, as so many suppose, out of organisations and endowments; it is not made up out of buildings, services, and prayers, and the regular duties which people connect with those things. The Church of God is made up out of people who have Christ dwelling in their

hearts; and John calls this Church "the bride of the Lamb"; he calls it the "New Jerusalem." He says that he had a vision, and saw that it was prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.

Let us consider, then, this doctrine of the bride, which is one of the wonderful doctrines in the New Testament, one of the most consoling doctrines to believers, one of the things which make us most hopeful and keep us from discouragement and from sinking down—the doctrine that God has the reconstruction of the individual, and of the Church, and of the world in His own hands; and that He is attending to this business of making the former things pass away. First of all, then, it is not a new doctrine. That is very clear in the New Testament. Let us look at a passage or two. You have it in Rev. xxi., which I have read, and also a little further back in Rev. xix. 9: "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

When you have read that passage about the marriage supper of the Lamb, you must go back into the Gospels, and read the parable

which it is based upon, where it says that a certain man made a wedding for his son; and you will see that the whole of the Gospel invitation is connected with the same figure. It was not St. John who invented it; it was there before him.

St. Paul has the same doctrine, too. He tells us that, with regard to particular Churches, he had a desire to present one company of believers to Christ as a chaste virgin. He also tells us, with regard to individual believers, that the man who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Now you will see that by these different figures, these figures which St. John, and St. Paul, and the Evangelists applied to the calling of the Christian Church, whether they are speaking of the Church as a whole or whether they are speaking of individual Churches or of individual men and women, they are all aiming at one thing; and that thing is a oneness with God. That is their gospel, and that is their aim; and the reunion of man with God and the will of God is what constitutes heaven in this life and heaven in the next. Now we are following after that

oneness. We believe firmly that religion is the marriage of the soul with God: I hope it is not very unorthodox to say that. Perhaps people may say, "Why don't you say that religion means being baptised, taking the Lord's Supper, saying the Ten Commandments, and reading your Bible?" Well, because that is not the way in which it is presented in the New Testament. The doctrine of the New Testament is that man may be reunited to his Lord and Maker, and that every provision is made in grace, as well as every adjustment in providence, to lead him to that blessed and gracious end; and if you are not one with God, beloved, it is because in some sense in your experience the former things are not passed away which God means to pass away, because there is something which you are holding to, some sins in which you are immersed, and which you are connected with, which God has condemned, and which you have not disowned. But God is calling us out of these things, and calls us into pure life and union with Himself, union with God and unity with the neighbour, a union in which ill shall disappear, and in

which the pains and trials of life shall by-and-by be altogether removed, a union which is based upon God and truth, for He says, "Into that holy city there shall nothing come in which is unholy or unclean"; and you may be sure of this: that if there is any measure of experience in this life to be realised which is comparable to the fulness of the blessing in the next world, it consists in the excluding of the impure, and unholy, and untrue from the heart and life, just in the same way that God means to banish them from the whole of the world. We furnish a little picture of the next world as soon as we begin believing for a full salvation. I mean, there is something about the experience of a truly consecrated child of God which preaches heaven, which tells of it, and which, in a certain sense, justifies God for having made the world. For we realise that God is justified in having made us when we are perfectly subordinate to His will and quite happy in it; and if He can make us so in this life, well, that is a little picture of what the joy in the next world is like.

Not only do the Apostles preach this doctrine

in the New Testament, but it leads to something further back in the history of the Church. I am very fond of tracing out the history—what we call the evolution—of a doctrine, because doctrines do not always just drop down into the world ready-made. It means that God has been unfolding His thought to men, and they, with their lesser thoughts, have been trying to apprehend it, perhaps first from one side and then from another side, until at last they arrive at some definite and approximately final statement, and call it "a Christian doctrine." And this doctrine of the oneness which we speak about, and which is represented under the figure of the Bridegroom and bride, is the doctrine which Jesus Himself taught, and which was taught before Jesus came. When Jesus spoke of the wonderful relation in which He stood to man—His affection for the race of man, and His love for those who were in the inner circle of His union in this world—He spoke about His relation to them under the same figure of the Bridegroom. He called Himself the Bridegroom. If you will turn back to where they asked John the Baptist

whether he were the Christ, you will see that he said, "No, I am not the Christ, but I am the friend of the Bridegroom"; "The friend of the Bridegroom stands and hears the Bridegroom's voice, and he rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice; and this my joy" (that is, the joy of the friend of the Bridegroom) "is therefore a fulfilled joy."

John the Baptist teaches just in the same way as St. Paul, St. John, and the Master Himself did. He teaches the doctrine of the Bridegroom and the bride; and he taught that right at the beginning of his preaching in the New Testament. If the forerunner taught it, it leads back to something earlier still. It is an Old Testament doctrine; for over and over again you will find the prophets teaching in their message to Israel that the Lord God was wonderfully in love with His elect people, that He was wonderfully full of compassion and desire to speak to their hearts. Sometimes it is personified in one way, and sometimes in another: "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and talk to her"; "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall

thy God rejoice over thee." And I suppose that every Jew who has studied or thought over the Old Testament, knows the doctrine very well that Israel was the bride of Jehovah, and that He had united Himself unto her in a covenant of love, out of which have come all the promises and all the hopes of the race. Well, if that is so, what a wonderful change Jesus has made in the doctrine! It is not any longer Israel the bride of Jehovah, but He has put us in the place of Israel, and Himself in the place of the Most High God. You see, there is no longer any room for the doctrine of Bridegroom and bride on a Unitarian basis. You need the Christian doctrine in its fulness to understand the relation in which we stand to Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Head.

Well, that is the history of the doctrine. It has come down out of the past, out of the partial revelation into the full revelation of the Gospel; it has come down out of a message to a particular people, living in a particular country at that time; and it has come now to be a message to all people, all kindreds, and all tongues. It is a message of oneness. Jesus

speaks this message to the Church at large. To every one who bears His name, to all those who are gathered under all signs and conditions of membership, He sends the message of holiness and the offer of reunion with Himself. He sends it also to particular Churches. Blessed is that Church on which such a visitation comes; blessed is that Church to which God sends by His servants a message of a closer walk with God; and nothing is worse for any Church in any community than the rejection of such a message as is involved in the larger evangelical promises of the Gospel. But He also comes down to the individual; and He brings this sacred message of white robes, and holy life, and individual communion to us at our own doors, and tells us in a certain sacred and limited way that we also are united to Him in the tender affection which is described in the words, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." If we get to that, then some of the former things are passed away. I am certain that that old notion that God loved people while they were positively sinning

against Him is a notion which needs interpreting. We do not mean to say that God does not love people; but we do have to show that there is nothing that they can know about it practically, and that they have no experimental realisation of what God's care over them means in its depth and fulness, while they are resisting the work of God within. You do not know anything about the hidden love of God unless you submit to God. If you go on every day denying God, you must not expect God to be confessing you. He says, "I confess them that confess Me." I suppose we may say (without hurting the Gospel or diminishing the truth of the message) that He loves them that love Him. We have to confess and harmonise with Him, and submit; and many things have to be put away before we can be addressed in language like the prophets represented God as using to those who are nearest to Him. If you are going to live in the inner circle—and I do not understand a man not wanting to live as near to God as he can—you are not going to do that and live in the inner circle of the world's affections at the same time.

This is no "SUNDAY" Jesus that we are offering you, no "CHURCH-TIME" Jesus; this is the "WORKING-DAY" Christ—One who lives with us, who tabernacles under our roof, we may say, much in the same way as He tabernacled in our flesh and blood so many years ago—One who says, "I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them; they shall be My people, and I will be their God."

Now this is a great message, beloved! The people who talk to us about reform do not strike down as deep into the nature of things as this. I hope I am a good reformer, in the right sense of the word. I want to see everything wrong put right—"strikes," and all the rest of it. But the worst strike in the world is the strike against the will of God; the most terrible lock-out is when we resist blessedness and find presently that the Master of the house hath shut to the door. Our defect lies in our want of submission to God's law within. It is the non-recognition of the promise which He has made to us to restore harmony in the creature. You and I may have that harmony. If we don't have it ourselves, we shall have

very little heart for preaching any other gospel. You won't convert sinners to any remarkable extent unless you have the doctrine of union with God to fall back upon. You may start any number of "Pleasant Sunday Afternoons" (God bless them!); but unless you have got something in the shape of a union with God, which is a blessing from Sunday to Saturday, you have not got the right thing. We build on union. Our Gospel flows out from it, to preach things which we know, things which we taste and handle, of the Word of life. That is the real blessing of the Gospel message; and if we have got a message for the people, and are able to bring sinners in, you know quite as well as I do (and perhaps a great deal better, if you are in the work all the time) that there is nothing saves people so quickly as the preaching of a *high Gospel*. Let people know that we have got *something*, and that *God has given it*. I know that is orthodox, because I have got a sentence that bears on it out of Wesley. Wesley says, "When Christian perfection is not strongly and explicitly preached, there is very seldom any remarkable blessing

from God." And he also says, "Until you press believers to accept full salvation *now*, you must not look for any revival." I am afraid many people have been making a mistake. They have thought the proper thing to do was to try and get sinners clean first, and saints afterwards. But I very much question whether it is not exactly the opposite, and believe that the place to begin is the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse, where John says, "I saw a new Jerusalem" first, and afterwards goes on to say, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." A clean Church always means a clean world in proportion as it is a clean Church; and if you are in harmony with God, people know it. They know the white robes you wear; they know where they came from; they know they are the gift of God's grace to your faith; they know that the smile you carry is not a manufactured smile, made up for an occasion, but that it belongs to you as a part of your renewed nature; they know that your compassion is not the compassion of the "charity-box," but that it is brotherly love which makes you help people, and that what

makes the brotherly love is Christ within. Now, if you have got Him within, you will be able to show Him forth. This Saviour offers us full redemption, but He only does it on His own terms. You may have *everything* for *everything*—the exchange rules all. You may have His presence continually; you may have peace flowing through you like a river; you may have sin under your foot; but you must have Him in your heart to do it. And there is no other holiness that is worth preaching except that which means that God reigns within and has accomplished the reunion and made former things pass away. How many things, maybe, you want to get rid of! How much has come down out of the past, the inheritance of the race! I think no people are so much to be pitied as those who have strongly marked sins brought into life with them, and which, you may say, in one sense, they are not responsible for. Well, their case would be most miserable, as our case would too, if those evils which we see in our flesh were not the very arena in which the power of God is manifested. I mean, if we have not a gospel against

heredity, I shall begin to doubt whether we have a gospel at all. God deals with heredity. If your mother or father or grandmother or grandfather had a bad temper, and you have been saddled with that bad temper all your life, if you will come to God in lowly penitence and faith, there is grace enough to cure it and power enough to give you such a redemption that generations of previous sin shall not prevent nor undo the work which the Blessed One is able to do in your soul. I say that would be a very impossible gospel to preach if it were not that we had the doctrine in the New Testament, and a great many witnesses rising up to say it is true. There are hardly any of us that have a vital message to the world that have not been saved from something or other that we brought into the world with us. Probably we have traced it back, and have found where it came from; and we have gone to God to get the deliverance, and He has given it to us, given us the power and ability to make the former things pass away; and when He makes the former things pass away in our lives, I say that is a kind of bridal experience: it is ability

to work for Him, to suffer for Him (because the bride that does not suffer for her lord is not worth much); it is the power to bear the cross and the burden and heat of the day. God gives it to us; it is something which has come down to us out of heaven from God. Praise His name that there is such a salvation! And you and I, beloved, may have it. It does not matter if they call us bad names so long as we get it. You may be called a "Perfectionist" for preaching Christ to the full; but if He dwells within, it won't hurt you, and you won't bear any ill-will against the people that give you the name. "If they have persecuted Me," He says to His bride, "they will also persecute you." The way they persecuted Him was, amongst other things, by crucifying Him. Does He mean, if they crucified Him, they will also crucify her? Well, they will try their hands at it; but when they try, they will find that every blow which is aimed at an indwelling Christ will fall short of its mark just as certainly as blows did which were aimed at Christ in the flesh. None conquered Him; He rose victorious over all. The very cross itself was

a ladder up into paradise; and God will make our trials ladders up to heaven if we will only bear them with Jesus; but apart from Him we can do and bear nothing; without Him there is no hope, no comfort, no New Jerusalem, no restored social order, happiness, or joy within; we enjoy these things on the condition of that sacred companionship, even as our Lord said, "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may believe that Thou, Father, hast sent Me."

III

UNION WITH A PRAYING SAVIOUR

"*I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me. Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.*"—JOHN xvii. 9-26.

III

UNION WITH A PRAYING SAVIOUR

MY subject is in general the intercession of our Lord Jesus, and in particular the relation of the intercession of our Lord Jesus to our personal sanctification.

Now we may be sure of this : that, whatever else the Lord Christ was, He was a praying Man. Whatever were the relations of the Sacred Humanity to the Father, we are quite sure that when He was on earth those sacred lips moved in prayer, and those sacred knees bent in prayer, and those holy hands were lifted up for the men and the women that were in the world ; and we know that there is no criticism whatever that will touch that question. Criticism may sometimes be able to say that a verse here or a sentence there has been added to the text and does not form the

original course of a Gospel or of an Epistle; but criticism will never criticise away Jesus Christ's prayerfulness, and those prayers of His will never be reduced to "nothingness," as if they were the passing words of one generation, and not meant for all generations.

Well, we have this praying Christ. And when we come to read what He said and to understand a little of it, we find, to our great satisfaction and delight, that He is very closely related to our spiritual advance in the prayers that He prayed, and that we can be sanctified by Jesus Christ's prayers, just in the same way as we are sanctified by a right belief in and an absolute devotion to His cross.

I have been very interested from time to time lately in studying the way in which the whole life of Christ is the teacher of holiness. All the situations of His life and all the teaching of His lips express one purpose—namely, the restoration of the image of God in man. That is what He came for, beloved. Whatever else other people preach, Jesus Christ never preached any half-gospel; He neither gave us a deficient calling, nor offered to us a measure of grace

that was insufficient for the calling. He never preached a series of impossibilities and offered them to you so that you might take hold of them as though they were possibilities, and then be deceived and disappointed by having taken hold of something which would not bear your weight. It is quite possible to have holiness teaching of a sentimental sort that will not stand a day of trial or a time of cross, but Jesus Christ's preaching of holiness is not sentimental holiness; it is not the holiness which is meant to make people happy in meetings and unhappy out of meetings. It is the holiness which is meant to swim the dark river with, and to carry us over every big stream of trial and difficulty that we may have to pass; it is the holiness which is meant to be an experience for the cloudy and dark day, which will keep our testimony bright, and which will keep us true, loyal, and happy, and full of the gracious Spirit. Such was the holiness of Christ, and of this holiness those that believe are made partakers. Christ's life is the restored image of God in man, and all the situations of that life are of the nature of

gospel; but His prayers in particular are full of the message which is involved in His life. Let us then praise God for a praying Saviour.

Now these great prayers of our Lord are largely sanctification prayers, because, of course, our Lord could not stop with blessing us halfway. What you call the "Lord's Prayer" is a sanctification prayer. A man can be sanctified on "Thy kingdom come," and he can be sanctified on "Thy will be done." Some people will never be sanctified until they pray, "Forgive, because I have forgiven"; and we can be brought into the experience of the highest knowledge of God and harmony with God if we learn rightly how to pray, "Deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom": only, whichever petition we adopt, we must mean it when we pray, like Jesus meant it when He prayed; and we must not put in a little caution and say, "But I know that there are some kinds of evils so deeply ingrained in human nature that Christ's prayers do not apply to them, nor Christ's power."

Some people call the seventeenth chapter of St. John the Lord's Prayer, because it is in

some ways wider and deeper than the prayer which we commonly use in our churches and meetings; and yet, beloved, it is not a very different prayer. It is the same kind of praying. It is a prayer that desires to compass this full salvation and bring the believer up to the mark which Christ has set as the high-water mark of his salvation. And that high-water mark of Christ's prayers and of Christ's belief for us in salvation is a long way up above the creeds and confessions which men have made up, largely out of their own experience. You cannot, for instance, read this chapter, where the Lord prays that they may be truly sanctified, and that they may be one with Him, and that they may be kept from the evil, and so on, and then turn round and recite to yourself the confession that no man since the Fall is able to perfectly please God, but must daily displease Him in word, and in thought, and in deed. I am quite sure that the Westminster Confession, however useful a document it is in other senses, goes to shreds before the burning zeal of our Lord's desire for us; and so does all teaching that

is of the same kind. The teaching and preaching which looks at the sinner from the side of the Fall instead of from the side of the Redemption withers away when the glory of God appears in man, and when the promises of God shine out from the heaven of His love, and when He tells us the length, and breadth, and height of His salvation, and what He has offered to do for those that believe in Him.

We have, then, these prayers of Jesus. Let us see where they will take us. They are connected, as I said, very closely with the subject of our sanctification. There is an intercessory Spirit abroad in the world, and there was an intercessory Spirit in the person of the Well-beloved. Perhaps we may say that the first suggestion which we have in the history of creation of the Spirit of God brooding over the face of the waters is a kind of intercession; God brooding over chaos and disorder. It is His nature to do it, and we are all of us more or less in the chaos until the kingdom of God shall come. What puts us right is the spreading out of the holy wings of Divine intercession over us, the love of God for the

creature, the Spirit of God descending, and moving, and working, and pitying those of us who are out of the heavenly way; and so when our Lord came on earth He came with the wings of the creating Spirit, He came with wings of healing. The prophecy says of Him, "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." An old Quaker two hundred years ago, describing his experience of the kingdom of God, said he had felt the healing drop from His wings.[1] Certainly something like that happens to us. The sense of God's presence and of His power; the beautiful knowledge of the life of God in the soul of man; the predictions which God has uttered over His new creation,—these things are our health and our strength when we take them in, while life more abundant is given to us from day to day, that we may know we live by God and that there is no other way in which a man is ever going to live rightly.

[1] Isaac Penington: "I have felt the healings drop upon my soul from under His wings; I have met with the true knowledge, the knowledge of life, . . . and this hath had the true virtue in it."

When our dear Lord reproved the Jews for having refused His message, He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings!" That is what we call intercession, that spirit of pitying love, that spirit of gathering love and controlling care and power. With this spirit our Lord was filled.

Now just as Christ shows this spirit in its fulness, so every believing child has a measure of it. If you are His, you know what I mean. When you were brought to the Lord, one of your instincts was to go and spread your wings over the needs of somebody else (it may be some of you have got pretty large wings by this time, and you are able to pray for a good many people and bring a great many under the sense of God's presence and power); and by that fact, that you were made an interceding being, a praying being, you proved your unity with God in Christ more than by any other confession; yes, a great deal more than by merely standing up in a meeting to speak, which may be a very little thing. *Our conversion to God*

made us members of the body of an interceding Christ. We not only confess that "Christ liveth in me," but are also aware that "Christ prayeth in me."

An old Christian father says that a Christian brother should sometimes say to another brother, "Come and lay thy hands upon my head, and bless me"; and I am sure we do that. We know what St. Paul meant when he said, "Brethren, pray for us," and we are constantly helped and blessed by the visitation which comes to us through the intercessions of other people. Every child of God has a measure of this spirit of intercession; and I speak for myself when I say I do not know anything that I have ever enjoyed in the kingdom of God but that I have received it in measure through the spirit of intercession which God has manifested in some of His dear children. Surely that prayer-life is the life of the child of God, as it was the life of our Lord Himself.

Now when Jesus prays for His disciples, you will not be surprised that His prayer exhibits the marks of universality. It is not unreasonable for us to suppose that what we

hear from Him should have in it something of the nature and substance of eternity; and we may say that this particular prayer in the seventeenth chapter of St. John is an instance. But all the prayers of our Lord are singularly timeless. Each particular prayer is also a universal prayer. Everybody is under the prayers of Jesus, whether he knows it or not.

Every sinner has been prayed for, right to the end of time. Do you suppose that the praying brethren who may come and kneel with you in public, or who may intercede for you in secret, would do you very much good unless there were some larger praying going on somewhere? We are hardly able to express our own desires to God, and find it still more difficult to express other people's. The helpfulness of these prayers is that they lean on the prayers which Jesus prayed. Every sinner is under them. "Father," said He, "forgive them; they do not know what they are doing." Is that a time prayer or an eternity prayer? Shall we limit that prayer, and say it applies only to the band of Roman soldiers, or to that handful of scribes and Pharisees, or even to the

Jerusalem crowd? Was it not designed for the people in our midst and around us who may be denying Him to-day, far larger and more needy crowds than those that gathered around Him in the days of His flesh?

Every timid soul is also under the prayers of Jesus. He said to Peter, "I pray for thee, that thy faith fail not." Then when Peter fell, you know, he fell softly, because he fell on that prayer. It was a good thing he had that prayer to fall upon; and if he had been held up, as he might have been, it would have been by holding on to that prayer. And if you are tempted and tried, and your will is being constrained to something outside the will of God, and you are drifting from the Divine harmony instead of being swept into it, as you ought to be—if you are in that state of trial, and difficulty, and tribulation, and danger, shall we shrink up that little prayer to Peter, or shall we not say that in Peter our eternal Lord prayed for all who might have Peter's thoughts and Peter's temptations, and that if it should happen that any of you are to-day likely to be ashamed of Christ, the same petition and the same burning

care and love goes out for you, and that He can keep you, and that His prayers hold you, and that God has gone out in Christ towards all poor timid souls to the very end of time?

And not only the timid people and the sinful people, but the believing people, are under Christ's prayers. The man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness comes under Christ's prayer. What prayer is that? This prayer, beloved: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world does not receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Note the two stages of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost: "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." When you are hungering and thirsting, therefore, and are wanting a deeper life in God, and when your mind has been touched on the subject of holiness, either because you have seen it in the Scriptures, or because you have seen it shine out in the lives and from the lips of some dear brethren and sisters in God, or even if you

have never seen it anywhere, only you have been inwardly convinced that it must be somewhere—when you get that sweet conviction coming upon you, the conviction of the possibility of sanctification, then you have the prayer of Jesus like a sacred dove spread over you. This prayer is balancing itself, as it were, over your spirit. You are receiving the revelation of an unclaimed promise of God, which rests upon you just as certainly as it rested upon the saints in the olden time who went apart to plead and claim the fulfilment of it for themselves and for the world in which they lived. Shall we let that promise shrink up and say it only applies to the hundred and twenty chosen people—Mary the mother of Jesus, Peter, and James, and John, and the rest, down to Matthias, and a little balance to make up the number and total of the first Church? Shall we let that promise be limited to a few? or is it not a prayer which claims all His own people, and all people that are longing after holiness, and all those who are tired of themselves and anxious to find rest in God? That prayer must be our prayer; and it is a prayer which is over

us and for us to-day. You see what a blessing it is to have a praying Saviour. We are very glad when the spirit of prayer is poured out on a community or in a meeting, as we know it always means good; but we may remember that there is one Person who never is wanting in the spirit of prayer: it was always poured out upon Him; it was always as incense rising to the Father from His life; and it has always been a blessing descending on mankind since He ascended to the glory.

We have then such a High-priest and some knowledge of His intercession. This prayer is called the High-priestly prayer of Jesus. It is not altogether wrong. There is a great deal in the New Testament which shows that our Lord did take what we call a high-priestly position towards His Church. It was very natural that He should do so, because in the Jewish Church there were days in the year on which all the hopes of the people centred around the motions and actions of one elect person. That sacred person was set aside perhaps by election, or in other ways, according to the different times in the history of the people.

That sacred person on the day of atonement drew to himself, as it were, the whole sins and errors of the people, and presented them before God in the holy place. That was the solemn day, the most solemn day, of the whole Jewish year. The Passover day is not anything like it in respect of solemnity. For on that day, when the high-priest comes into the holy place to perform his ritual and to present his petition before the mercy-seat, when he comes forth from his interview with God, he comes out, and he speaks over the people these words of blessing—"Now ye are clean"; and those are the words which you find in the beginning of the fifteenth chapter of St. John, where Jesus says to His disciples, "*Now ye are clean* through the word which *I* have spoken unto you." It is evident from the fact that our Lord used such words as these that He wished them to recognise Him as occupying a high-priestly relation to themselves—a relation of One who could intercede for them with the Father, and who could bring them back promises of God from the presence into which He entered. Now that thought is, of course, all through the New Testa-

ment. The disciples were not slow to catch the idea; they took it, and they worked it out.

When St. John saw his great vision in Patmos, he tells us that he saw our Lord "clothed" (as it says in our Bible) "in a vesture down to the foot." If you look into the original, you will see that the word that was used for this vesture that went down to the foot is the same word which is used for the high-priestly dress; we may represent the idea of what he saw by translating his words, "I saw Him in His priestly raiment." That is, he saw Him carrying on His concern for humanity in the risen life; and we believe that, and we know that it must be true. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have the same thought: "For we have not a High-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." And so in many other passages. Now turn to your chapter in St. John, and say to yourselves, "I want all the precious things that Jesus the

High-priest prayed for to be fulfilled in me." That is not a presumptuous position to take. We don't want to disappoint Him. Of course it may cause you some disappointment yourselves. You cannot please everybody; you cannot please God and please yourselves; you cannot please God and please your neighbour, not altogether; but you can please God, and you can please God in allowing the prayers of Jesus to be fulfilled in your experience. That is part of your privilege in Him. Now, first of all, be quite sure that He really did pray for you individually, and in order to sanctify you. He says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." You see the prolongation of Christ's prayer. You were in it, beloved. There is no doubt about that. That is one of the wonderful things that make us believe so in Jesus Christ. I can pray for my people; I can pray for their friends and for their children; but my power of prayer does not embrace the great inheritance of God right away on to the end of time. I could not pray for your grandchildren and great-grandchildren right on to

doomsday! I have not power enough nor scope enough to carry so many people before God. Yet He carried them all, every one. He carried you, and He carried me, and petitioned the Father, and prayed for us, and presented us before the throne of glory. He prayed, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth."

"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Is that possible to-day? Is it possible for us to-day to be in the world, and to be perfectly preserved from the spirit of it, so that the troubles and disturbances of outside life do not affect our sweet communion with God? Is that possible? Is it possible for you to be truly sanctified, so that you are saved from prejudice, from pride, and delivered from passion and continual enmity with God and man? Is that possible? Jesus prays for that very thing. That is the kind of prayer which He gave utterance to; and we are sure that it was for us. When we believe great things of our calling, Christ is with us. If the prayer, "Sanctify them through Thy truth,"

is uttered to-day, it comes a great deal more from Christ's lips than it does from anybody else's; and if you are hungering and thirsting after holiness, it does not require much explanation to see that your hunger and thirst is secondary, and that in reality the hungry and thirsty Person after holiness is of necessity our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, because He has everybody's hunger in His heart, while we are only able to call upon God for ourselves and for one or two others whom He has given us.

We have then these great prayers of Jesus and are under His intercession to-day. Now, of course, the person of our Lord is everything to us—I do not mean in theology so much as in practical life; and just in the same way as His life is the great life, and all our little lives are involved in it, Christ being the macrocosm, and ourselves the microcosm, so our prayers are involved in His. And when we see that, we shall see also that the great stream of prayer which comes flowing upon the Church and is the life and union of the Church, that which binds us together in one and brings

blessings down upon the Church, flowed from our Lord's person. And when we see the great prayers in the Bible and the wonderful prayers in the New Testament, they came from Jesus. The macrocosm made the microcosm. If He had not prayed, other people would not have done so. If you will turn to the Epistle to the Colossians (iv. 12), you will see there the prayer of Epaphras. We do not know very much about brother Epaphras, except that he was a companion and friend of St. Paul; but we know this about him—that he was a man thoroughly baptised with the spirit of prayer. He prays for the Colossian Church that they may stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God." What business had he to pray such a prayer as that? Why did not the religious organs of the day take him down for it, and say he ought not to pray such big prayers unless he put in the condition beforehand that he knew they would not be answered? But we may reply, "A man does not pray great prayers like that for other people until he has experimentally proved that such prayers can be answered for himself." His agony of soul for

other people is not aroused until he has had something of the agony for himself first. Was the man likely to pray that other people should stand perfect and complete in all the will of God unless he had the witness in his own soul that he stood there? I suppose a good man, however much he might be liable to mistake, would not be tempted to such a piece of hypocrisy as to pray a much bigger experience for other people than he had any idea of enjoying or experiencing himself.

Very well, then, you see *that* prayer leans on something. It leans, first, on Epaphras's own experience—he had, as we say, "the blessing"; and, secondly, he prayed, as it says in the Greek, "with agony"—with intentness, with striving. He prayed for the Christians who belonged to him that they might have that blessing too. That is not all. His experience, his strong crying and tears for them, is connected centrally with Gethsemane and with the upper room in Jerusalem. All the praying that God's will may be done on earth has its connection with the garden where the Man of Sorrows is kneeling upon the ground and

saying, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Do you suppose we could pray that way if Jesus had not prayed so? When you have come into the deep place in life, when every one has been against you, and when familiar friends have denied you, and when your circumstances in life have become difficult and you have not known which way to turn, and you have been cast on God with strong crying and tears, how sweet it was that your tears ran into the flowing stream of Christ's tears of compassion, and you got strength from His victory to claim yours, and God made you to stand because Jesus stood!

Turn next to the prayer in the third chapter of Ephesians. That prayer is a kind of Magna Charta of the holiness movement: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named" (you know the prayer), "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your

hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to grasp with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Where did St. Paul learn to pray such wonderful prayers as that? He learned, as he says, from the Fatherhood. He bowed his knees to the Father. I tell you that takes us back to certain words in the Gospel where Jesus kneeled down and said, "Abba, Father." "All things are possible unto Thee." These words are the first draft of Paul's great petitions; they are involved in them, and underlie them.

You see, beloved, it is not sentimental holiness. Jesus Christ's preaching of holiness was never a sentimental holiness. It was a holiness which showed itself to man in sacrificial deeds from first to last, and in a continual acceptance of the Cross on our account; and I do not believe there is any way of getting into the blessing of pure life and communion with God unless we find it by the way of the Holy Cross, and keep it by the way that we find it. There

is, of course, such a thing as singing ourselves into ecstatic conditions; but when the trial-time came, as Jesus went down into the "deeps" for us, it is true that they sang a hymn, but it is also true that they went out to the Mount of Olives and to the Garden of Gethsemane. That was Christ's holiness. Don't you see how different that is from the idea that you are simply going to be given an experience which is to keep you happy to the end of the journey? Of course you will be kept happy if you are kept faithful; but to be kept happy does not mean that you are going to be severed from Christ's cross or from the conditions of sacrifice which make the redemption of the world. Christ's prayers are all cruciform, both His prayers for Himself and His intercessions for His people; and if we are going the right way in this matter, if God has really offered to us purity and offered to us power, we may be quite sure that He has offered it to us by the royal way of the Holy Cross.

IV

UNION WITH THE WILL OF GOD

IV

UNION WITH THE WILL OF GOD

THE Gospel tells us that upon a certain occasion, when our Lord was sitting and teaching in the midst of a group of charmed and attentive hearers, the circle was broken in upon by some one (some brawler in God's open-air church), and the discourse interrupted (in the midst of who knows what Divine allegory or oracle?) by the information that His mother and His brethren were standing without (they should have been sitting within) and desiring to speak with Him (they should have been hearing from Him). And our Lord looked round upon the circle of the learners, and drawing the attention of His disturber to their

> . . . "beautiful and holy faces,
> Lit with their loving and aflame with God,"

He said, "Who is My mother? and who are

My brethren? . . . Whosoever shall do the will of My Father in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."

You will find the passage in the Gospels at the following places: Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 19-21. Of the three accounts, that in Mark is the best to study, because it is probably the most primitive form of the story, and because it presents the incident in a connection which is probably the historical one, and certainly must have been intended by the writer, according to which sequence the interruption of our Lord's discourse takes place shortly after a somewhat similar occasion when His kinsmen had endeavoured to stop Jesus or imprison or detain Him on the ground that His reason was affected, and when the scribes and Pharisees had taken up the same misunderstanding in a grosser form by attributing His power to the indwelling of an evil spirit.

It is well to bear this sequence in mind when we try to interpret the account; for if it is a historical sequence or suggested as such by the writer, it furnishes us with the interpretation of the disturbance of our Lord's teaching by

placing it in line with other movements of a distinctly hostile character. The message sent to our Lord by His mother and His brethren was no casual remark of bystanders, but it was a distinct interference, a hostile movement directed against His mission. There were points in Christ's life when He shared in His own person the experience which He predicted for His followers, that a man's foes should be they of his own household. Even in Nazareth and in Capernaum the Sword came as well as the Peace, and inward questionings sometimes took the form of outward hinderings of the Son of Man. When we have read the incident recorded by the Evangelists, the first thing we have to do is to replace the headline in our Bibles, whatever may be there at present, by the words—

THE HOLY FAMILY.

I had at first almost said *A Holy Family*; but this would have been a mistake, and would have been clean contrary to Christ's teaching, which was that there could be only one Holy Family, and not that there was one and might

be another. "Whosoever shall do the will," said He, "the same is the brother, the sister, the mother." Let us then take the words just suggested as a headline to the story, and we will spend a few moments in thinking over the conventional meaning which we attach to the words "Holy Family."

The words express to us to-day, when we hear them superficially, much the same thought as would have been suggested to the circle of listeners by the words "His mother" and "His brethren." They are the terms which we employ, for example, when we refer to the efforts made by the great painters of past days to represent in visible form the links between our Lord and the humanity which He had embraced. When we say "The Holy Family," we call up before our minds one great picture after another which bears the name: perhaps it is a picture of our Lord and His mother, with St. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist, or it is St. Joseph and the Virgin, with our Lord standing between them, or it is the cave at Bethlehem, lighted with unearthly splendour, where the human forms are flanked by the ox

that knew his owner and the ass that recognised his master's crib; or it is some one of those many forms in which the painters represent the Adoration and Love which must have marked the earliest days of the Son of Man. And often along with the loved and loving human faces the painters represent to us the adoration and love of an invisible world in cherubic faces and galaxies of wings and eyes. We shall never cease to love the great masters for the way in which they spent themselves on this subject, and there are some of their treatments of it which the world will never weary of, because child-life and mother-love have been so glorified in them. They are the true expression of that sentiment of which we have the falsity and counterfeit in the language of Herod the Great: "When ye have found the Child, bring me word, that I may come and worship Him also." No one brings us word so clearly as the great masters do. When they are at their best, their work is distinctly theology of the inspired and inspiring kind. A friend of mine said, after seeing the great Dresden Madonna, "I don't see how any one can look

at that picture and be a Unitarian." The picture had provoked the thought on the artistic side of life which the whole story of Christ was meant to suggest on the historical side.

But now let us turn from the old masters to the Master Himself, and let us allow Him to paint the Holy Family for us, and compare the representation which He offers with that to which we are accustomed. We find from the Gospel that His idea of the Holy Family is quite different from the conventional one. He takes the brush and paints out all the familiar faces that we know so well. The outward relationships vanish away; mother and brethren and sisters disappear, and other faces appear instead of theirs, listeners and learners, imitators of and sufferers with Himself, doers with Him of the Divine will, heirs with Him of the Divine glory. The truth "Blessed is she that bare Thee" is overwritten by the larger language "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and do it." So we are brought to consider what Christ paints out, and why, and who are they that are painted in, and whence came they.

In the first place, we may say that the boundary of the Holy Family (for the Family may equally be described as a Land, and has its boundaries as a Holy Land has) is the Divine will—nothing less and nothing more. We may, if we please, speak of this boundary as the frame that holds the canvas upon which Jesus is painting His picture for us. Inside its limits will be found the saints on earth and the saints in heaven. "Holy living" is another term for living in the will of God: those who are in the will of God are holy; those who are out of the will of God are unholy. The definition is sharp, as Christ's definitions usually are, and there does not seem to be a middle or third term. It is this will of God by which we are sanctified. Sanctity, or its equivalent Beatitude, is that condition in which the lives of believers have become, in their own proper measure and degree, the incarnation of the will of God on earth. The prepared body of Christ was explained by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews as being the equivalent outwardly for what was inwardly denoted by the words "I come to do Thy will, O God";

and we should err gravely, and be numbered amongst those who do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God, if we were to suppose that the perfect conformity between Christ's inward law and His outward life was meant to be an argument to discourage us from our calling to conformity with God's thought for us, or that His prepared body was to be reckoned a reason against our presenting such bodies and spirits as we have to be living sacrifices in a reasonable service. On the contrary, we may derive great encouragement from the fact that His obedience was accomplished in a body that claims fraternity with ours, and we must believe that the doing of the will of God is possible for those who follow the blameless Lamb of God, even though they are not themselves blameless lambs to begin with.

In the next place, we can see that the reason for the appearance of any given figure, at any given time, amongst the saints in either world is that the person in question has got into touch with God and with the will of God; and the reason for the disappearance of any given

figure from the charmed circle of illuminated lives is that he has ceased to be in harmony with God. It is a changing picture, where the grouping of the mothers and sisters and brothers is constantly altering, where some press nearer to the central radiance and some elongate from it and disappear, where some are lost in God, absorbed into the central abyss of love, and some are lost out of God, withdrawing themselves from the light into the darkness. No doubt this may sound strange, and it may be said that what we are describing is not a picture, but a kaleidoscope, and that the blessed words "mother," "sister," and "brother" ought not to be regarded as thus ephemeral in character. Let us, then, examine the picture which Christ presents to us, and study some of the individual cases in it, in order that we may see whether our interpretation is a correct one.

Of the central figure, at all events, there is no doubt: the Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Necessarily in any picture He must be the central object, whether it be a grouping of two or of three, as in the leading situations in the Gospels, or whether it

be the multitude that no man can number in the summing up of the saints. If two appear with Him in transfiguration glory, He, naturally enough, must be delineated between them; and if three are crucified on crosses of shame, we take it for granted that Jesus is in the midst—even the crucifiers had that much sense of symmetry; if He walk on the day of His rising with two that are in deep distress and disappointment, could we paint the scene of the Divine converse without making the disciples group themselves instinctively one on each side of the mysterious Stranger? And so with every situation in His life: the triumphal entry into Jerusalem divides its procession into "those that went before" and "those that followed after" Jesus; and the triumphal entry into paradise knows no other central figure nor any other focus for the motions of the blessed than the throne of the Lamb.

And certainly the centre of the Holy Family is and must be the Lord Christ. It is worth noticing that in His representation of the blessed company that do the will of the Father He always placed Himself. "I do always

what pleases Him"; "The Father hears Me always"; "I am the Son that does nothing of Himself"; "God worketh, and I work too." Such sayings as these are a summary of the perfect obedience and communion in which He lived.

But when we turn to the other members of the Holy Family we find a great difference. Begin with the blessed mother, of whom we think as highest in privilege above all her race. Set her as high as we may, consistently with being a little lower than the angels, we cannot help seeing that her will was not always the will of her Son, and therefore not one with the will of God.

Sometimes He went too slow for her judgment, as when at Cana of Galilee He was urged to hasten His miracle, and compelled to say words out of which no criticism can remove the rebuke which they obviously contain: "What have I to do with thee?" or "What have we in common?" It is the language of alienation, the same which the demons use with regard to Himself. "Mine hour is not yet come." It is a formula of independence as regards the

creature, used by One who lived in God towards those who acted apart from God. He used it again when His brethren urged Him to premature assertion of His dignity and claims.

Sometimes, again, the Lord went too fast for the approval of His mother and brethren, as in the case which we are studying. Suggestions were made of His insanity, and plans were laid to reclaim Him to that slower conduct which never attracts the extremer forms of reproach. But if the mother of Jesus was thus disposed to alternately spur and restrain her Son, what is this but saying that there were times when she was not a member of the Holy Family at all, and therefore needed the same teaching and training as the rest of the company, if the words of eternal blessing were to be spoken over her, "The same is My mother"?

Or take the case of the most privileged of the disciples, beginning with those who were relations as well as followers. We have already seen that His brethren did not believe in Him. The earliest versions of the Gospel add a qualifying word to that severe indictment; they tell us

that "His brethren did not *at that time* believe in Him." But even if the qualification be a just one, as we can readily allow, the necessity for such a qualification is a sufficient reason for Christ's language with regard to His brethren after the flesh; it means that "the Lord did not *at that time* regard His brethren as members of the Holy Family."

And if we pass to the study of the experience of those who were closely connected with the most solemn occasions of our Lord's life, we must say similar things. John the Beloved was sometimes in the Holy Family and sometimes not: he was in it when he leaned on Jesus' breast, and as St. Bernard says, "imbibed from the Only Begotten what He had imbibed from the Father"; he was not in the sacred oneness when he stretched out his hands to heaven to borrow a thunderbolt and destroy a village of inhospitable Samaritans.

Peter, too, is a strangely fluctuating face in the first days of the Gospel-preaching. Great confessions and great denials follow one another so closely as hardly to leave space between them for Christ to praise the confession or to

war against the deviation. "Thou art Christ. . . . But Thou shalt not suffer." "I will go with Thee to prison and to death. . . . But . . . I do not know the man."

Now we may be sure that these fluctuations could not be meant for the settled experience of the dear mother and brethren and disciples. The Lord could not have intended that a tidal wave of joy or illumination should toss His disciples to His breast, to be followed more or less rapidly by an undertow which should carry them back again into conditions which they had coveted to leave. There must be some way of being kept in the love of God, if there is any way of finding the love of God for ourselves. But the art of keeping what we find is an art which is only learned in an upper chamber on the day of Pentecost. Nor is there anything short of a direct occupation of our souls by the promised Spirit of God that will enable us to be "always what we sometimes are, and never what we sometimes have been."

V

CREED AND CHARACTER

V

CREED AND CHARACTER

THERE is an extant piece of early Christian literature commonly cited as the Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, but which would be more accurately described as a homily read by some unknown person in the Church at Corinth, from which I wish to quote the opening sentences, after which I will construct a lesser homily upon the one from which the excerpt is made. The document is an interesting one, not merely from an antiquarian point of view, as being perhaps the earliest known sermon in the history of Christendom outside of the pages of the New Testament, and because it has the advantage of being complete in itself, whereas the records of apostolic discourses are for the most part mere fragmentary notes; but also because there are suggestions in it of the elevation of thought and of morals which we

associate with the apostolic age. Whoever the writer may have been, he was a manly soul to whom the Isthmian games, which were close at hand when he was preaching, suggested the same wrestlings and runnings for spiritual crowns as had been spoken of by an apostolic athlete who had preceded him.

The opening words of this interesting document are as follows: "Brethren, we ought to think of Jesus Christ as God, as the judge of quick and dead. And we ought not to think meanly of our salvation: for when we think meanly of Him, meanly do we also expect to receive." It is clear that for the man who uttered these words there was a necessary connection between creed and character, between what we confess and what we experience, between low views of Christ and meagre receptions of the grace of Christ; and, on the other hand, that lofty views of the person and work of Christ are closely related to the fulness of the blessing of the everlasting Gospel. It was not of the creed as a bulwark against heresy that he was speaking, but of the creed as a stepping-stone to experimental holiness.

You will find the same conjunction of ideas in another very helpful little book of the Spirit, the *Dream of Gerontius*, by John Henry Newman—the little book which Gordon took with him to Khartoum to die on. When Gerontius is on his death-bed, he makes his confession as follows:—

> "Firmly I believe and truly
> God is three and God is one:
> Next I do acknowledge duly
> Manhood taken by the Son:
> And I firmly trust and fully
> In that manhood crucified:
> *Every deed and thought unruly*
> *Do to death; for He has died.*
> Sanctus fortis, sanctus Deus,
> De profundis oro te," etc.

And you will notice the very same flight of the soul from its creed about God to its conformity with God as we detected in the early Christian homilist. Now it is quite possible that it may be a new thought to some that orthodoxy and sanctity have the ultimate connection which we have suggested; certainly the common opinion would seem to be that, so far from there being any link between them, anybody can be orthodox

and no one can be holy. But that opinion simply arises from wrong views with regard to the faith of the believer and the Divine nature of which he becomes partaker. We are not speaking of mere lip confessions, nor of Utopian attainments: we are talking of God and the children of God.

It is not easy to have right views of God and clear vision of Christ. Even on the intellectual plane it does not become easier as time goes by to say that we believe in the Son of God: on the contrary, there are abundant signs that the cyclical movement which Church history so often suggests is bringing us back again not only to the primitive life of the Church, but also to the primitive questions of the Church, and we may very likely end with a last heresy similar to the first as regards the person of the Lord Himself. But if it is not easy to have satisfactory intellectual apprehensions of Christ, neither is it easy to possess that spiritual apprehension which handles and tastes and feels the Word of Life. Apart from the help and illumination of God Himself, the Christian creed is an alpine range of impossible beliefs,

But if belief is alpine, what are we to say of conduct and of character—I mean of conduct as explained by Christ and character as required by Christ? Is it easy to be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation? It is Christ of whom we are told that He was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners; and His level must at least be as high as our mountain. And even those who venture to disbelieve in the elevation of Christ's character do not make it easier for us to be what we ought to be by the unbelief which they suggest. They cannot make us more by making Him less. The Christian aspires to be holy because his Lord and God is holy; he is hardly likely to aspire more if he should believe less.

And what is true of virtue and of sanctity in general, as we regard them mirrored in Christ and hear them enforced by Him, is true of all the separate headings under which the Christian character can be subdivided; so that whether we consider the command to truth, justice, and love, to patience under the hand of God or at

the hands of men, to the forgiveness of injuries, and the benediction of those that curse us, we are obliged to regard the Christian life as an elevated range of inaccessible conduct.

And the strange and wonderful thing is that all the spiritual men seem to discover that these beliefs which make the Creed, and these practices which make the Life, however impossible and inaccessible they may be separately, are possible and accessible when taken together, and that thus taken they blend into a shining tableland of faith and life,—

"To which our God Himself is moon and sun."

And it need hardly be said that the truth of this is not deduced from a quotation from an anonymous father of the second century, or the imaginary dying Christian depicted by a father of the nineteenth century, for it is merely a roundabout way of saying what St. John says in a sentence: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" or what St. Paul proclaims equally forcibly from his own experience: "I have been crucified with Christ,

and I live no longer: the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."

So it comes to this, that we must say "God" and "Holiness" as nearly as possible in successive breaths; so that God may make holiness possible, and holiness make God real. We must say "A Divine Saviour," and then "A Divine salvation," thinking meanly neither of the one nor of the other. And we must sedulously exclude from our hearts and lives everything that would involve unworthy thoughts of Him. We must covet that the thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed by the inspiration of His holy word, in order that we may worthily magnify His holy name. The prospect of a life continued without the heart being cleansed is unworthy of the Name. "I should die, O my God," said St. Catharine of Genoa, in one of her moments of religious ecstasy, "if I thought that I should fail of loving Thee with all my heart."

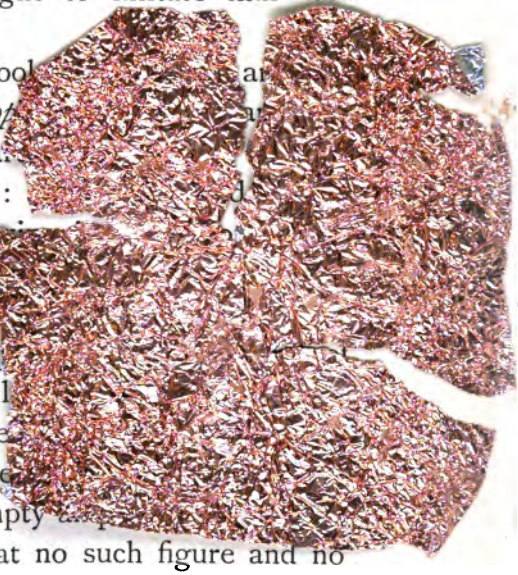
We may be sure that nothing will be so likely to make us miss the mark of the Divine glory as the habitual exercise of unworthy thoughts with regard to the Christian calling in

general, or our personal vocation in particular. Faber says that it is as easy for the devil to contend against God with low views as with mortal sins. I think this is probably true, and that if it is true low views must be classed with the temptations that make for mortal sins. In the armoury of the devil they are ranged alongside of the most biting and burning of his fiery darts. At the same time it must be admitted that the analysis and detection of low views, either in the individual or in the Church, is not so easy as the crusade against deadly sins. Minimum Christianity has a kind of orthodoxy of its own: it is considered respectful to Christ and His Apostles that the Church should have receded from what they proclaimed and lived; and, on the other hand, along with the complacence over a Church which has ethically and spiritually gone down, there is a disapprobation shown towards individuals who may be considered too keen in their purpose to reascend: so that it comes to pass that a crusade against mean views of Christ and of His great salvation would hardly be recognised as a crusade at all.

We may, however, be sure that if the enemy

fights against God successfully with low views, the most successful way to resist him is to disarm him. Now those views of God and of His work in man are low views which in any degree suggest that we have a smaller God to deal with than the early Church had. It is a necessary part of our idea of God that He is not capable of being, according to human ideas, more and less. "Thou art the same, and Thy years have no end" is philosophy as well as religion; it is the same thought that underlies the words, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." But if it were not an intellectual necessity for us to think of God as changeless and timeless, we should not hesitate to say that for the true Christian, if the question were asked as to whether God could be less or more, the answer gathered up from every day of communion and confirmed by every moment of illumination would be that God was more and more continually. So that it is easy to understand how St. Paul sometimes falls into expressions which suggest growth in God, and talks of "increasing with the increase of God," because the revelation of God and the com-

munion with God and the fellow-working with God were developing at such a rate, both in his own experience and in the experience of those whom he taught to imitate him and Christ in him.



One of my early boo[illegible] ar[illegible] trated copy of *Æso[illegible]* [illegible] them one fable in pa[illegible] me in this connection : [illegible] leaning over a huge [illegible] tained excellent Fal[illegible] fragrance of the vinta[illegible] was once filled. I q[illegible] the story, and the il[illegible] produced in the prese[illegible] one might wish to se[illegible] aged form and the empty [illegible] course the moral is that no such figure and no such vessel can represent the Christian Church. Of course we would admit cheerfully and gladly that the maxim about the permanence of sweet odour in a vessel that has once been filled ("Quo semel imbuta est," etc.) is true of the Christian Church : we do not think it easy for any Church to be so dead that a devout or

hungry soul cannot find in it some savour of God in Christ. But we think the scent-bottle theory of the Church is not a good one. One needs to paint another figure by the side, with the flush of heavenly youth, *and a cup that runs over*. Underneath the pair of pictures we may write the old-fashioned words, "Ecclesia stans aut cadens": on the one side we illustrate the day of Pentecost fully come, and on the other the day of Pentecost fully—gone!

Further, we must remember that those are low views of Christian life which assume that a less complete surrender to the Lord will be adequate to our full salvation in the present day than was necessary in the days when loyal and loving people left all that they might follow Christ. Confessors are made out of people who have something to tell, and martyrs out of people who have some one to love. We cannot charge the early Christian teachers with concealing the secret of their success, and letting the knowledge of their elixir die with them. "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things"; "Where Thou goest I will go"; "These are they which follow the Lamb

whithersoever He goeth." But no tradition, not even from the best and loftiest lives, is sufficient to secure for us the point of contact with the Eternal Life. Low views must be chased out of the personal life, as well as banished from our thoughts of the Church. When this is done we shall make progress. It will be a birthday of new spiritual science.

How often in the matter of our earthly knowledge everything leads up to some definite grasp of a new truth, upon the single apprehension of which all future thinking turns! Sir William Rowan Hamilton tells us that the birthday of the science of quaternions was on a certain occasion when, as he was walking with Lady Hamilton towards Dublin, "the galvanic circle of thought began to close, and the sparks which dropped from the circuit were the fundamental *i*, *j*, and *k*" of the new science. Does any one ask what would happen if the galvanic circle of *obedience* were to close in any life? We cannot tell in particular what sparks would fall from the completed circle of communion; but we have it summed up for us in general in the formula of Acts v. 32: "He

hath given the Holy Ghost to them that obey Him."

And, last of all, those are low views of the Gospel which assume it to be less catholic in regard to the individual than in the world at large. We all of us believe in foreign missions nowadays; but to believe in claiming the world for Jesus has been a progressive education in the Church from the beginning. It has been carried out by contention often, and by entreaty ever. Peter only grasped it slowly, James perhaps never; Antioch divided over it, and Paul that went to the work went under what was often very like anathema. But it is easy to-day to say that the earth is the Lord's; and we hardly consider any one a good Christian who has not some share in missionary enterprise, some touch of missionary fervour.

Is it less important to proclaim the empire of Christ over the passions than over the savages of far-away islands, a less necessary Gospel to set Him over all thoughts that rise up against obedience to Him within the secret mind than to carry His truth and set it above idolatrous worships and imperfect apprehensions

of God? Must it not be, as Newman said, that the visitation of God's Spirit is "as catholic in the individual as it is in the Church at large, and that it claims the whole man for God"; and that any spirit which makes reserves from this great obedience, the circuit of which God is closing in the thought, will, and affections of every true believer, is not of God?

VI

THE SABBATISM OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

" *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*"—HEB. iv. 9.

VI

THE SABBATISM OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

WHEN the proposal was made for carrying a railway through some of the most beautiful scenery of the Derbyshire dales, an indignant letter was written by Mr. Ruskin to the public papers to stay, if it were possible, the devastation that seemed to be impending over a country which he loved not merely for its own sake, or for his own sake, but for the sake of the people themselves, to whom its exquisite configuration was of the very nature of an evangel, and therefore entitled to the tradition of an unblemished text from generation to generation. Amongst other arguments which he urged against what, I suppose, may be called the secularisation of the Dale scenery, he said that Derbyshire is "a lovely child's alphabet, an alluring first lesson in all that's admirable." And without discussing the

question of the justification of railroads in beautiful localities, or the value of Mr. Ruskin's defence of such localities against the spoiler, we may recognise, in the sentence quoted on the educational value of small strips of country, a truth which has been closely wrought into the religious history of the race. For it has pleased God to make one small land of such importance in the spiritual progress of the people, that not only have the ordinary processes of His providence been seen in its story, not only has it been the stage for the fulfilment of promised mercies, and for the working out of threatened judgments, but the highest aspirations of the soul in quest of union with God have been expressed in the language of this country, of its rivers and plains, of its corn and wine and oil, of its wars and rests; so that we may fairly say, in Ruskin's terms, that Palestine is a lovely child's alphabet, an alluring first lesson in all that's admirable; and when we say this we mean chiefly to draw attention to the thought expressed by the writer to the Hebrews, that out of this alphabet was spelt the truth that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God."

And I suppose there is no historical student, and certainly no student of Scripture, who would dispute or deny the educational value of the land of which we speak. Nine-tenths of the good words we repeat are in Eastern language, if we only knew it: they can never be more than half translated, however progressive we may be. We shall always talk of Promised Lands, whenever God breathes into our souls the hope of good things to come; of Beulah or wedlock lands when we describe the life of abiding communion with God; of New Jerusalem, rather than of Atlantis or Utopia, when we see visions and dream dreams of renewed and revised social order: it is significant that the most enthusiastic persons who took part in the Chicago Parliament of Religions have described the scene as being the Mount Tabor of their personal experience. There was no American mountain adequate to express the emotion! From the historical standpoint at all events this little land vindicates its right to be called a religious alphabet, and the smaller the land the more wonderful is it that so many lessons have been taught in terms

of it. Compared with Egypt or Assyria, this land is only a strip for which they both contended; yet it is from its natural features, and not from theirs, that God taught His children their elementary lessons, and is teaching them to-day some of their more advanced lessons. Compared with its neighbour Phœnicia, from which Western peoples received their secular alphabet, we may say of this land and its message to the rest of the world that it has for its Cadmus Him that was from the beginning. For the Spirit of Truth not only made a message out of Christ's life, but also out of His environment, and made the land a talking and a teaching land for all those who have ears to hear. And so

> "Faith hath yet its Olivet,
> And love its Galilee."

It was natural enough that this should have been so when Christ was on earth; for in those days all creatures found a speech, and the very birds and beasts and trees and flowers were full of oracles: the birds might say, We are created to be preached about; and the

lilies, We are here to be considered; and the lambs, When in fold we are the figure of His Church, and when lost, we are the favourite text for His compassions to discourse on; and as for the trees, the fig tree when barren proclaimed His judgments, when slow of fruit, His forbearance, and in the richness of summer promise, His advent. For everything that was about Christ was vocal of Christ. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the message of the land was over when Christ ascended. For as time went by a new lesson was framed out of the very desolations that were impending over it, and an illuminated mind made an argument, recapitulating the story of its first conquest, and saying, almost as if he were working out a string of syllogisms,—

"If they shall enter into my rest:
They to whom it was first preached, entered not;
It remains that some must enter in;
If Joshua had given them rest, he would not afterwards have spoken of another day.
There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God."

So we conclude that it was God's will to make us learn the lessons of our personal

sanctification out of the migration of His ancient people, and to say of the relation between their fortunes and ours, "The Holy Ghost thus signifying . . . that there remaineth a rest to the people of God."

And now let us go a step further, and with the map of Palestine before our eyes, and the story of the entrance of the children of Israel before our minds, let us say that it appears that the good land and large into which God led His people was designed (1) to be surveyed from a mountain of vision; (2) to be entered upon by a passage of faith. We begin with vision: because eyes take possession of their inheritance before hands and feet; and as a matter of fact hands take hold and feet enter in because eyes have seen. Nothing is more important than a good perspective in the kingdom of God; until we have a measure of vision, there is no place for footsteps of advancing and appropriating faith. Vague and general notions as to the kingdom of God are almost worthless; they never constitute the terms of a covenant between God and the soul. Splendour, glory, and immensity, some one

has said, are great thoughts, high ideas; but a little definite happiness would be more to the purpose. We need to get some information from God Himself as to what it is that He is wanting to do with us and for us; and if He opens the eyes of our heart to the knowledge of His will, and makes us strong to grasp with all saints the length and breadth and height of Redeeming Love, we may be encouraged to exchange the panorama for the reality, and to turn contemplation into obedience. It is for this reason that our Lord in His teaching on earth proclaimed a series of beatitudes in what we call the Sermon on the Mount. These beatitudes are a series of instantaneous photographs of the Holy Life, in which the initiated soul is seen under so many successive aspects, as mourning and as merciful, as pure in heart and aspiring with divinely quickened desire; but all these detached views are only so many glimpses of what is comprehensively defined under the head of Blessedness; and just as in Edison's newly invented kinētograph a succession of rapidly taken photographs may be recombined

into the story of the motion of an object, so the phases of beatitude are to be combined together as beatitude, and then, seen in one combination, are to be the object of the spiritual covetousness of the soul that is ascending to the Divine likeness. When, therefore, we have an intelligent conception of what blessedness is, we are on the mountain of vision ; and when we stand on the mount of vision it is natural to say, " I pray Thee, let me go over."

As we ascend the mountain of vision it is a counsel of the first importance that we take our stand with our faces toward the good land and *our backs to the wilderness.* It is a panorama that lies in one direction only, and the vision depends on the attitude, as well as on the altitude. For this reason the Scriptures exhort us (1) negatively, to let the dead past bury its dead, for " the time past suffices to have wrought the will of the Gentiles " ; to " forget the things that are behind," and even to " leave the word of the beginning of Christ," in order that (2) positively, we may " prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God," may " reach out towards those things

that are before," and be "carried forwards to perfection." And this attitude implies, amongst other things, that we have done with legal years, and have silenced vain regrets. We must exchange the obedience of the letter for the law of the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus. The thought either of our own loneliness in a wide world, or of our own disappointment in a contentious world, must be eclipsed by the assurance that we shall neither be lonely nor disappointed when the kingdom of God shall be fully come.

Of the wilderness life, then, it is said, "The time past suffices"; the covenant, moreover, of God with the soul is indicated in the words with which the Apostle continues, "that we should live . . . the rest of our time . . . to the will of God"; it is a covenant with the residue of our days. And this covenant is accepted by the soul on the mountain of vision in an act of consecrating faith :—

> "Lord, in the strength of grace,
> With a glad heart and free,
> Myself, my residue of days,
> I consecrate to Thee."

We must not, however, forget that even on the mountain of vision, and when the soul is looking in the right direction, there are such mists as oftentimes obscure the landscape even to people who wish to see. These mists are the results, in many cases, of a false theology, which has for generation after generation insisted that God shall not do for His people, and Christ shall not be to His people, just what the Scriptures propound. It is impossible, or almost impossible, to argue with persons who are set at strife with their own blessedness by their teachers, but there is one consideration which is encouraging, and that is this: it often happens that to sincere people who are seeking the closer walk with God there comes an experience similar to that which Wordsworth describes in the third book of his *Excursion*, when

> "a step,
> A single step, that freed me from the skirts
> Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
> Glory beyond all glory, ever seen
> By waking sense or by the dreaming soul.
> . . . . . .
> That which I saw was the revealed abode
> Of spirits in beatitude!"

It is a waste of time to try and fight with the blind vapour of traditional misconceptions of God and traditional misinterpretations of the Scriptures, when a single step of obedience will often set us saying and singing that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God."

We pass on to the next thought, which is that our Lord who planned the mountain of vision planned also the passage of faith, the river which must be crossed before the good land is ours. He set Jordan on the map, and it is not for us to erase it. Here we are brought face to face with the fact that we are to come down out of the vision that we may go over into the reality. The vision is withdrawn as we descend to take possession of what God shows us to be most truly ours: the mystics call this deprivation which comes at a certain point in the advance of the soul the dark night of faith, when every step has to be taken in absolute dependence upon God, and assurance that the vision was truth and no lie. We drop into a lowly vale, as low as the hill was high: it is the valley of our individual nothingness, the nothingness of the creature.

Jacob is left alone, and a strange angel wrestles with him all night long, until the day of a new covenant-making (that shall also be covenant-keeping) dawns upon him; until the word of blessing shall be spoken, that "as a prince thou hast power with God and with man, and hast prevailed." The children of the Patriarch are brought to the edge of the overflowing stream with which faith has to reckon; they act as though the waves were rocks, or as though the waters were dry land. And the "lovely child's alphabet" has nothing more lovely than the thought of the unreserved obedience and unlimited submission which are the characteristics of the great surrender by which such things are claimed for our own as "God has laid up for them that love Him."

If this be the alphabet by which God teaches, may we be the children that learn, the "obedient children" (1 Peter i. 14), the "dear children" (Eph. v. 1), the "little children" (1 John ii. 1), the "children of God" (1 John iii. 1).

VII

THE CONTAGION OF ALTRUISM

"*I am the light of the world.*"—JOHN vii. 12.

"*Ye are the light of the world.*"—MATT. v. 14.

VII

THE CONTAGION OF ALTRUISM

WE put these two verses side by side, because they are so identical in expression that they must refer to some marvellous possible oneness of character; and since there is nothing so altruistic or other-loving in the world as the sunshine, which, as far as we know, is all giving and no taking (a radiant energy of which we predict no return to its focus), we are entitled to conclude that an altruistic Saviour must be accompanied by a people who are saved in this sense, that they become themselves altruistic. And for this reason we do not to-day print the word "light" in the passage from John with a capital letter, and in the passage from Matthew with a small letter, because the change of the type is not an indication of great faith or of great humility, but is too often a mark of unbelief and her

elder sister pride (who affects humility); or, if not exactly so bad as that, it is a mark of the unreality with which we regard the sacred humanity. (Both these last words also we print to-day with small letters, for the same reason as above.) It is quite true that capital letters have become a part of the popular religion, but the conviction grows upon us that they have been used to excess, and to the detriment of the spiritual life. Take up, for instance, such a book as Farrar's *Life of Christ*, and notice how the early life of Jesus is large-typed, so that even the simple word "boy" cannot be printed without being made to suggest that He was never like other children. For example, "the Boy was with some other group of friends or relatives in that long caravan"; "the Boy was in the temple to inquire and learn." We are quite sure that such printing throws an air of undue mystery about what is perfectly natural, and prevents us from entering into fellowship with Christ's early years, and with His mother's joy over the unfolding purpose of God in those early years. He who grew in wisdom and in stature from day to

day must often have had the added cubits of His height tested by human hands with a human rule; for the Gospel teaches us to reverence the anthropometry of Jesus, as well as to believe all that prophets have said, or saints have sung, about His redeeming work and His changeless love. And it is significant that the records of His life have come down to us in manuscripts, which the scholar knows to have been in the first instance entirely destitute of the distinction of capital letters; and those who are mystically inclined, and desire to realise in their own experience everything that is communicable in the life of Christ, will take the hint, and say to themselves over this doctrine of altruism, as over everything else that unites us to the Lord, "that we are in Him, in that which was from the beginning"; and "as He is, so are we in this world." They will aspire to live with His very life; they will kindle "flame from flame." So much being premised as to the union between the other-loving Lord and the other-loving people, we turn back to the fifth chapter of Matthew, from which the second of the announcements of Christ quoted

above is taken. The first thing to be observed with regard to the verse is its setting; it is a pearl set with pearls; it comes as a pendant to the beatitudes, and therefore is itself a sum-total of beatitude, even though the word "Blessed" be not immediately prefixed. The fifth chapter of Matthew, in its opening verses, is a kind of spiritual maelstrom, which draws us down by successive rings and whirls into untold depths of self-abnegation and abandonment to God. Against each one of them might be written, as a marginal comment, the words, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"; and against the totality of them the words, "The kingdom of God is come." And the soul that is in any one of the experiences indicated by the successive beatitudes finds that the experience over which the blessing is spoken is in close correspondence with a similar experience in the life and manifestation of Jesus Christ.

We can sit down with these verses, and mark a marginal reference to each one of them out of the Scriptures of Christ's life; we can note His poverty over against ours, and let the same mind be in us which was in Him who made

Himself poor for our sakes. We can put our mourners' tears into Christ's bottle, and find that it is not an empty bottle, but the receptacle of the sympathy which dropped at Bethany and the strong waters of Gethsemane. The meek, whom He felicitates, are blessed by Him who was both meek and lowly, and their promised inheritance is a portion of His own boundless right and His own fathomless rest. They are hungry and thirsty for the same Divine will, which was the meat and drink for which He discarded or postponed the lesser nourishments; they are merciful because their Lord is compassionate, and as He was good to the thankless and evil, so are they to the extent of being "foolishly, incredibly merciful." Their heart-purity is the circulation of His life-blood and the anointing of His Spirit; their peace-making proves them to belong to the Prince of Peace, who is also called the Son of Peace, and more briefly the Peace; and the great beatitude which closes the announcement, the persecution which ends the tale of good as the Cross ended the work of His earthly life, cannot be read apart from the preface, "As

they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." The beatitudes are, therefore, as we said in a previous chapter, so many instantaneous views of the manifold grace of God in Christ.

And it follows from this that any one who is a sincere believer will recognise the unity which underlies the various manifestations of God in character, and will sedulously avoid the thought that he is in the world to illustrate special virtues; much less will he think to apologise to God for special failings by special excellencies. The covetousness of the enlightened soul is not limited to one beatitude, but takes hold on all; nor do we truly aspire, unless we wish to ascend every time that God lets down the ladder, and whenever we see any one else ascending. The thought of being meek but not pure, forbearing but not compassionate, is foolish with the radical absurdity of a divided Christ. If the soldiers who crucified Him respected His body that it might not be broken, and spared His coat because it was made in one piece, let us reverence the unity of His spirit, and covet the seamlessness of His virtue

and of His obedience, for even in the believer it may be said that "the good is one."

But having seen Christ in the words of Christ, we want in the next place to read the beatitudes in the light of the history of man, and especially the question must be asked in the Scriptures which men are asking in the world at large. The discussion is going on amongst scientific men and philosophers as to whether the order of human society is becoming more altruistic; and in order to solve this question they are asking, "What is the origin of altruism?" with the same earnestness that they ask the question, "What is the origin of life?" We want to know when man, in his own history and in the history of his ancestors, became other-loving, as against self-loving. Did the beginning show the love for others as well as the love of and care for self-life? And when other-love appeared, did it appear in the disguise of children, or in the form or fashion of friends, or how did it come; and being come, what are the laws of its growth, development, and perfection? Nothing is more hopeful than that science and philosophy should be pursuing these questions. They must

run up against the Cross on this path; and if they run up against the Cross, it will go hard if they do not run into the glory that accompanies the Cross.

Now we are not philosophers, and cannot answer the hard questions which they put; but we can search the Scriptures and scrutinise the calling of the saints for altruism, and not go far before we find it. Suppose we ask the question with regard to the Sermon on the Mount, with its magnificent prologue and promise of good, Is it individualist or altruist in its teaching? The answer is that it is, in the first place, profoundly individualist; the blessings are on personal experiences, upon individual longings. Hunger and thirst, even when righteousness is the aliment, is individual. To be meek and inherit the earth almost looks like the much-reviled capitalist disguised. Of the nine blessings enumerated, seven relate to our own experience, without any apparently direct good to the neighbour or to the social organism; only two relate to the good of others. The one speaks of the exercise of mercy, the other of the making of peace. But even these are not

dissociated from personal revenue and income. "Ye shall obtain mercy"; "ye shall be called God's bairns." Perhaps there may be some who would take offence at this, and say that the mystic is not so very different to the more grossly selfishly living people, who want to get all the good that there is for themselves alone, and to leave other people behind, in the very same way as is done in the more common form of the strife for existence. But this misunderstanding would arise from not observing that every one of these personal blessings is so placed as to lead up to the two great announcements which Christ makes over the people that have passed under His blessing hands. These two statements are: (i) ye are the salt of the earth; (ii) ye are the light of the world. And this is not individualism, much less is it self-life and self-love; it is pure undiluted altruism. We are in the world to be sweet and make it sweet; to be enlightened and to give light. Christ's salt and Christ's sunbeams have nothing of self-love about them; it is other-love pure and simple. It is Christ in me that it may be Christ through me. Some people who look at

Raphael's Transfiguration are a little offended that the picture has been crowded with two different scenes. It is a very large canvas, and would have made two pictures very well—one, of the saints in the light with Jesus, and one, of the crowd and the suffering child and suffering father around Jesus; one picture for the top of the mountain, and another for the next day at the mountain's foot. But Raphael was right; the two pictures must be made into one; and every rapture is only the preface to an action or a passion. One frame must hold them both.

And it may be taken for granted that if there is any ground for the belief that in the world at large God is making people altruistic, even against their will, and by all kinds of irregular pressure, much more is it true that the whole of the economy of grace in the creature is accomplishing the same loving purpose with untold directness of aim in the children of God. We learned the Lord's Prayer in the plural, and our daily spiritual progress only makes the plural into a larger majority. And happily for our faith it is precisely at this point of our advance that our religion becomes so delight-

fully intelligible to everybody. "Ye are the light of the world," said Jesus. "Neither do men light a candle," He continued.

> "Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
> Not light them for themselves,"

said Shakespeare. Was he stealing from the Gospel? If so, then the Gospel was easy to appropriate: but it does not cease to be Gospel.

> "How far that little candle sheds its beams!"

You can write that sentence as a marginal comment to the words, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem . . . and to the uttermost parts of the earth," and not defile the sacred page by the quotation. And it may be written over the limitations and incapacity of any consecrated life.

As we began our meditation by choosing ourselves texts out of the sunbeams, and have been led to see ourselves united to Christ not only in His life, but also in the altruism of His life, it will not be amiss to conclude with the prayer that we may be as other-loving as the sunshine, and as the compassions of God in Christ.

VIII

"HE THAT IS JOINED UNTO THE LORD IS ONE SPIRIT"

"*He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.*"—1 COR. vi. 17.

VIII

"HE THAT IS JOINED UNTO THE LORD IS ONE SPIRIT"

WE have in our New Testament the Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians —Epistles which concern themselves with the religious needs and difficulties of the time, but which are constantly in their language passing beyond the needs and difficulties of any particular time, and taking us over to those needs which are the eternal needs of the Church, and those blessed satisfactions of the soul which are the eternal vindications of God to His creatures that trust in Him. If we picked up these two Epistles and found them anywhere, without any headlines or titles or names upon them, with no address of the people for whom they were intended, and no introduction expressing the person from whom they came, we could very easily, by a little

study, determine a great deal both with regard to the person who wrote the Epistles and also with regard to the people for whom they were intended; it would not be, for instance, very difficult to show you that they were addressed to a trading community, to a people that were largely occupied in commercial life, for the language takes a business tone, and the expressions which are used even with regard to spiritual things are very often expressions which are taken up from the market-place and from the shop. For example, in 2 Cor. ii. 17, the writer of these Epistles says: "We are not of those people who huckster, or adulterate the Word of God; but we speak out of sincerity, and we speak as from God, as standing face to face with God in Christ." And if you look a verse or two further back than that, the eleventh verse, you will find the same writer saying that he hopes we shall not be over-reached by Satan, because we are not ignorant of his sharp practices. Now a writer who expresses himself in that way is writing to a trading community, and you would easily be able, if you were studying these Epistles

for the first time, and trying to find out something about them, to see that they were written to people living on one of the great trade routes of the East. Not only so, but we find something about the character of the people to whom these letters were addressed. They were living in the midst of a bad world, but they were also themselves a part of the badness of that world. It is not a pleasant record to read; it is a fatal Epistle for those who wish to prove that the ancient Churches were all good and the modern are all bad. We do not mean to attack primitive Christianity. The inspiration of the Church is a magnificent truth. Pentecost is rightly called Whit Sunday, *i.e.* White Sunday, and that means white faith, white heart, white garments: the primitive Church had that. In that sense we desire to be more and more baptised into the spirit of the primitive Church, more to speak as they did, to be consecrated as they were, to follow the Lamb as they did, to be glorified along with them even in this present life. There is such a thing as primitive Christianity; but you will have to be careful where you look for it. You

will not find it in the theory of the necessary infallibility of the teachers or the immaculateness of the people who were taught. I have often made the mistake of trying to find in the first century things which one hoped were specially characteristic of the first century, but which in reality were not so. But I found God in history, and Christ in the power of His people, and just as great a Christ as I am able to find without any history at all when I place myself on believing ground, or mingle with other persons who are in the same spirit of faith—the nineteenth-century Jesus Christ, this same Jesus. Church history is good, but it won't represent to us a spotless Church. On the contrary, it represents to us Churches such as some of us would not have liked to belong to, which we should perhaps have wanted to escape from into purer surroundings, even if we had to go out into the desert to find them. And that definitely is the kind of community that these Epistles are written to—a community, if we can judge by their vices, their failures and lapses, exactly similar to what history tells us to have been characteristic

of all the cities of the Levant and most of the cities of the great ancient world; and, as I have said, it would not be difficult to reconstruct from these letters what was the personality of the person who wrote them, and what were also the character and life of the people to whom they were written. These writings are water-marked heavily, and as we hold them up to the light we see that if they had no titles, and if the name of Paul was blotted out every time it occurred in the writings, we could still decipher and unravel enough to tell us the character of the writer as well as the time and the place. We could tell the people to whom they were written, and approximately the date at which they were composed. That is, of course, a result of criticism. Criticism is busied to determine truth and to recognise historical fact in literature. And do not be afraid of criticism. You may be afraid of all the dishonest criticism, and there is a good deal of it; but you will dishonour Christ if you are afraid of criticism, because no man is going to gain anything in his work for God by discounting and undervaluing the services of

persons who may be finding out the truth of God more carefully than we are able to do, even though it be only the truth of God as it appears in outward history. But behind this historical water-mark I see another water-mark of a different description, the water-mark of inspiration, that is to say, that the statements made are not merely results deduced from observed outward facts, but they are arrived at by the inward observations of God's ways with men, and expressed in words which criticism can never do anything with, except on the natural side, where it sometimes ventures to suggest that the experiences affirmed are mere extravagances; words which, when spoken in the midst of a community of people who want God, or of people who know God, arouse at any time in the history of the world or the Church the same kind of emotion and provoke the same kind of acceptation that they did at the beginning; words like this strangely timeless expression of the Apostle: "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." You do not need to go back to Corinth at all; you do not go hunting around asking what was the

state of the Church; then but you sink down into the midst of your own experience and the experience of the people among whom God has placed you, and into the sense and knowledge of your own standing to-day, and the standing of the people of God to-day; and you recognise it to be a great, eternal word of God that is spoken when we say that "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." And when we have got that in sight, we have got away from the difficulties and from the divisions—there is no more Calvinist or Arminian; because these words take you right up into the very presence of Christ; and if you are under the will of the Lord, they fill you with the outpoured and communicated life of Jesus in the soul. This is our charter, which is not in dogma, except where dogma in an introduction and part of experience, but it is in the great supercarnal, supersensual fact that is above observation of history and above mere record of emotions, the great fact of the revelation of God and the communication of God to the creature. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."

Now I suppose we might go on and say, in the next place, that this truth, at any rate, comes in a very unlikely setting. I am not going to draw your attention to the whole of this chapter; I would do it if it were necessary. It is a bad enough world to make almost any record of bad things appropriate in a certain sense at any time; but the study of evil is not what we are aiming at; because we notice this, that the Apostle, who was engaged in a very troublesome and difficult work, the work of discipline in the Corinthian Church, engaged in a heartbreaking work which often brought tears to his eyes, and brought him to his knees in the great intercession before God—the Apostle, I say, dropped the subject he had in hand, and took up the subject which he had in heart. The subject which he had in hand was the sin that had crept into the Church, the breaking out of apostasy, the presence of immorality and impurity in the Church, and he dealt with them faithfully as a good apostle of Jesus Christ; but as a good apostle of Jesus Christ he did not limit himself to dealing with sin. If we only deal with sin, we shall not

preach God in the sense that God ought to be preached. We have got to preach the kingdom of righteousness, of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; and so he breaks away from the subject which he has in hand to the subject which he has in heart, and that is the subject which asserts itself, as it were, spontaneously in the current of the Epistle, as much as to say, "That is what I would like to talk to you about if I could." And you can see that again in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, where he has again to deplore the declension of a great many who had forsaken the love of God and the glory of Christ: "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." But in the midst of his tears and in the midst of his mourning, with the Church, as it were, going to pieces over his head and about his ears, he says, "Our life is in heaven, and it is from thence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, who shall change our vile body,

that it may be fashioned according to the body of His glory." You see it is a spontaneous thought that broke into the midst of the death that was breaking into the Church ; the thought that broke it was this : Our life is in heaven, we are joined to the Lord, and we are one spirit with Him. That is a great truth ; it is a beautiful pearl of the kingdom of God. I do not care about the disagreeable Corinthian oyster-shell ; we are going to preach the pearl. If any man or woman got a fair sight of what it was to be one with God and live in the oneness and testify to it and suffer for it, which is the Christian's real inheritance, his true testimony, his proper characteristic, and comprehended even faintly and afar the utmost and furthermost that God can make us experimentally to realise, he would say, I shall sell all I have in order to find this beautiful pearl, which has shone out for me from the pages of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and which also shines out for me from almost every hymn that I sing and from almost every sermon that I hear preached, even when the minister did not intend to preach quite so far. Praise God,

we always hear a good measure of the Gospel even from backward preachers of it. I have heard ministers who did not believe in the baptism of the Holy Ghost pray for it in their prayers. I sometimes think that God will hear unbelieving prayers for believing people. At any rate, whether we believe or not, the word and the promise of God is not made of none effect to-day; and, wherever there is a real word of God uttered, the utterance is a blessing in some degree, though not of course to the same extent as when it falls from faithful lips, and is addressed direct to believing hearts. May God make us believe in what we say, and if any one prays for the baptism, do at least pray, "God grant that I may be able to receive and to witness it."

Our life, then, is this glorious life of which we are told, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." We may be sure of this, that *there is no necessity whatever for any one who has such a life as this to be disturbed from it.* I suppose, if anybody had a right to be, it was a person who had apparently been spending his strength in vain and labouring, according

to the outward judgment, for nought. There is no more trying or difficult circumstance than to bring people to God—at any rate, in appearance—and then to see them go back from that which they profess to have found. There is not anything more likely to break the heart of any one who has to preach the Word of God than to find that his ministry has the Corinthian or Philippian accompaniment in any degree among those to whom he is sent—the accompaniment of apostasy. To preach Christ, and then find people deny Him; to proclaim the goodness of God and the Reconciliation, and then see them in any degree trample under foot the blood of the Everlasting Covenant,—I tell you, if it crucifies Christ afresh, it also crucifies the ministers of Jesus afresh; because they share the failure, as it seems outwardly, of Christ; and if Christ can be heartbroken or heart-crucified, they must be heartbroken and heart-crucified too. And yet it is not so with the Apostle. In the midst of all this disappointment, when you see very little of God in the primitive Church, very little to encourage him, everything to provoke tears, he breaks out into

what is nothing less than a psalm in a sentence, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit," and goes up into heaven itself, as it were, in order that he may escape from the depression and the difficulty that he finds down here. If any one had a right to be discouraged, Paul had; but he was not discouraged, because he could not be discouraged without losing his union, and he could not sacrifice that without losing everything that he held dear; and if we are one with God we won't be discouraged. There are a great many centrifugal influences which would take us away from our centre all the time; there are a thousand forces which remove us from blessedness, and sometimes seem to keep us at war with blessedness; but even amid all this, the strong constraint of a Redeemer's love which we have felt and known, and that fellowship with Him which we have in service and in everything else, the great magnetism is stronger than that which contradicts it, the positive more than the negative. "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or

sword"—the being slain all day long for the kingdom's sake? "Nay; in all these things we are more than conquerors"; for the centripetal influence is more than the centrifugal. Now, beloved, we may realise that for ourselves in every possible environment. I sometimes say that those closing verses of the eighth chapter of Romans, of which I quoted one or two just now, are about the greatest words that a human soul has ever said of what God can do to those who believe in Him and rest in Him. These verses constitute in the Apostle's mind the creation of an ideal adverse environment with which he proposes that the life which is within him can deal. How much can you stand? How much will it take to disunite you from God? A cross word, a misunderstanding, a commercial loss, a little difference in the amount you carry about with you, and which you are perfectly sure you are not going to carry away with you—a very little difference of this kind will separate some people from God. A bankruptcy court will do it, and with some people something very much short of a bankruptcy court will do it. To have an account

presented twice will put some people out of the kingdom of God. Now make your adverse environment ideal; it is a lawful question, because you will get better saved when you know what can separate you. The testimony of the power of Christ to the Apostle to keep him saved and to keep him sweet was never intended, and those who love God will say it never could have been intended, to imply an apostolic monopoly of holiness. We, too, can say, "Jesus, I trust Thee to keep me through all surroundings," "Life or death or any other creature"; put these amongst the centrifugal influences, and when you have put them there put in this great centripetal sentence, which takes us up to the source from whence we come and from which we live, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." It is pantheistic, beloved, strongly pantheistic; but we do not propose to let the theosophists have all the pantheism to themselves. We have got some of it too. If you do not like the term pantheistic, say panchristic. I am not ashamed to say that I believe there is an experience of union with the Lord which is rightly characterised as

pantheistic, in which God has met all the needs of the soul, and has become the indwelling power of the human spirit; that the man who is thus united to God moves as God moves, and acts as the Lord wills him to act in the body and in the circumstances in which he is placed. Of course it is somewhat pantheistic; but Christ can be all in all in the nineteenth century as well as in the first, and we do not need to think Him less than He wishes to be to those who trust in Him.

Of all things that separate us, and they are many, the one great cause of separation, perhaps, is the fact that the love which is in the world seems to be of a non-permanent character. The greatest thing in the world is love. I never ask God, or hardly ever, for outward things; I do not know that I ever asked Him for glory or honour, and I hope I never shall; and I very seldom ask Him for material things apart from the kingdom; but I sometimes say things like this, that if God will give me three or four good friends, I think I can manage to continue to the end, because love is the machinery of life and the

motive power. Love is the centre of the kingdom of God. If there is any heaven on earth, I know what it is going to be made out of—the red-hot charity of believers to one another, and the affection of those who are drawn nearest to us in Christ. And yet, strange to say, that wonderful thing is just what seems to be one of the separable things in life. You have not only your own grave open before you, but a great many other people's graves; and as we are getting further on in life and passing along, our waymarks cease to be milestones, and become gravestones. I have not got on any funeral raiment, because I never wear it; the days of my mourning are ended, thank God; but you must not suppose I have never had anything to do with this apparent separability of love, in which we seem to see so much that contradicts God. There is a picture, is there not? of John Wesley preaching on a gravestone in Epworth Churchyard. It was very well for him to do so; but the funeral was, I think, not a recent one. God can help you to do something like what Wesley did on a recent gravestone—He can help you to say, "He that is

joined unto the Lord is one spirit," in the midst of trials and bereavements as you face them, and, what is harder still, when you turn after the first experience of desolation to look back at them. I have to a very great extent got rid of the idea of a frontier between the two worlds. I suppose there is a frontier, but it is like the frontier that you see between the countries on the Continent, where there is an area of delimitation on either side. That area, on this side, is called the Beulah Land ; and note, not only does the Saviour come and walk with men, but the spirits of the just made perfect come and walk with us, come to attend our spiritual meetings, and are deeply interested in the progress of human souls in holiness, and in the way they take their thrones and claim their crowns. They come and walk with us in order that we may be able to say and to sing that we are one family, one Church above and beneath, though now divided by the narrow stream of death. There is *no separation* for those who are joined to the Lord, and are one spirit in Him.

Next to death I do not know anything much

worse than loneliness. Misunderstanding is bad, but loneliness in some ways is harder to bear, especially for social beings, and we are all social when we are at our best. Nothing is so bad as being disjoined from those whom we love by those isolations which come necessarily in life, apart from death. Take a specimen—St. John in the island, the loving St. John, the well-beloved St. John, who could find enough material in his experience and in his hope to preach on the text, "Little children, love one another," all the year round, and never find the subject grow cold or stale, but could always preach on love, because love was everything to him; the man who leaned on the heart of Jesus, and gathered up the residual secrets of the great Gospel, and told them out to man; who lived in Ephesus, and there helped to build up a Church which had some of the brightest traditions of all that was best in the beginning, and then was taken right away from the midst of his work, not taken to heaven, not at all—he could have gone there perhaps more easily—but taken right away out into the sea and put down out of sight, only a little way out

of sight, of all those whom he had loved and laboured for, and set there, apparently, to end his days in nothingness; he who had had the greatest fulness of Christian hope and Christian service—he says, "I was in the island." You know what that meant, you people who have an insular experience of loneliness here to-day, whom nobody loves and nobody sympathises with, who seem to have to go to heaven on a single line, no one before, none to follow, none at the right hand or the left. That is all he says about his loneliness; and a verse or two after he says, "I was in the Spirit." That will do; for he that is in the Spirit is joined to God. He is not lonely any more; he is not separated any more; and his pains are over and his isolation is done, and what he begins with when he says in the first chapter of the Apocalypse, "I was in the Spirit," is only the first sentence of what turns out to be a great ladder which runs right up into heaven itself, and where you see not only God at the top, like Jacob did, but the Bridegroom and the Bride, the Bridegroom with His Bride, the everlasting Sabbath and the unchanging glory, where we

are restored to all that we may have lost, and where we find all that we have never on earth attained, and where the oneness is preached from the throne that faith learned by the Cross; and when we ask whether there is anything that can separate us from Him whom we love, the dear Apostle, looking back at us from the great reunion which he accomplished with the Lord whom we love, and leaning again upon the sacred Heart with a more interior embrace than any words of his first fellowship can express,—from that great embrace of love that has gathered back the soul that was its object to itself, he looking down upon us who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and after love, which is the essence of righteousness —looking down upon us to-day, the hungry and thirsty people of God, tells us that "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit." "Come hither," He says, "and I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

IX

GRACE AND HEREDITY

"*The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.*"—EZEK. xviii. 2, 3.

IX

GRACE AND HEREDITY

I DO not know whether any one has ever taken the pains to collect from the Scriptures the various statements which they contain of the doctrine of human heredity, and to point out the teaching of holy men of old upon the question of transmitted characteristics, which has come so astonishingly to the front in recent years. Certainly there are abundant materials for such a study, and they are the more valuable because of the limitation of the outlook of the Scriptures of the Old Testament to the fortunes of a particular people, so that although they do not furnish us with a very wide view laterally, being bounded by the frontier of a single province, and the changes and chances of a single tribe, yet in the vertical direction, the up and down of time, the direction of historical record and of prophetical hope,

they have a very extended outlook; and it is precisely in this direction that the problems of heredity will assert themselves. In fact, the passage which we have placed at the head of this chapter is one out of many evidences that the questions of heredity became very serious even to the Jews themselves, both in regard to their own national well-being, and as bearing upon the Divine Justice which was supposed to be involved in that well-being.

Nor are we to suppose that their perplexities are very different to our own; the same questions about the sour grapes which the fathers had eaten are in all our minds to-day, even though we are entirely out of the line of the national well-being or ill-fortune of the Jews. Our study of the question is perhaps a little more scientific and perhaps a little less religious, but that is all the difference: the actual problems involved will always be both scientific and religious; and, as time goes on, it may very well be the case that the two terms become more and more coincident. We see this happening in many directions, as in the analogies between the Selection of Nature and

the Election of Grace, and suspect that the story of human life needs to be told from both sides of its web. So with regard to the question of inherited and transmitted ill, we shall probably find that we have justified God about the same time that we have understood man, and in proportion as we understand him.

However, as we have said, the Old Testament, being occupied with the fortunes of a particular people, affords excellent material for a study of the moral issues connected with the laws of heredity. Many of its most striking statements acquire quite a new force when read in the light of these laws, such as the promise "in thee and thy seed shall all kindreds of the earth be blessed," or the doctrine that Divine anger extends to the third and the fourth generation of them that hate Him, and Divine favour to thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments. Especially is this the case in connection with those matters in which heredity affected social life, for we must remember that to the Hebrew mind the problems of heredity have more to do with caste than they have to do with morals; even

the "third and fourth generation" to which we just alluded is not an arbitrary expression meant to convey a rough idea of how long God can be considered to be angry with any given family; the terms used are the ordinary and recognised terms of guest friendship and tribal communion, they are the limits at which tribal rights are acquired or until which they are forfeited or withheld.

It is certain that no one who read the Scriptures with the view of finding out what they say on the subject of heredity would fail to examine the passage which we have transcribed from Ezekiel; for here we have the dark side of the question stated, the observed scientific fact of inherited misery, the decided though Oriental protest of man against an apparently inevitable past history which is continually rewriting itself after the proverbial manner of history, and along with this human protest there is coupled an equally strong counter-protest on the part of the Lord through His prophet against the irreligious feelings to which the observation of the law of heredity had given occasion. The people to whom the

prophet ministered had scented out this law for themselves; they expressed it hieroglyphically, if we may so say, under the term "sour grapes," and having begun to make wry faces at their fathers, they went on to turn distrustful faces on their God. Sin, having conceived, had brought forth Suffering, and Suffering was preparing to become the mother of Atheism. It was time for a Divine intervention.

It is worthy of notice that the term "sour grapes," as it appears in the prophet, is something very different from the proverbial usage which is current amongst us from a Greek source. In ordinary speech "sour grapes" stand for the cynical depreciation of good things which we are unable to grasp; but in the Scriptures they stand for bad things which we are incompetent to elude. The difference between the proverb in Æsop and the proverb in Ezekiel is as wide as the gulf which separates the thought of a human disappointment from the thought of the failure of the Creator Himself, and the variation in the size of the problem treated makes a corresponding variation in the treatment; the sage on the one hand stops

short with being witty, the prophet is nothing unless he is theological. He is dealing with atheism, not with mere discontent; his burden is not to soothe wounded pride, but to "justify the ways of God to men"; and who ever had this service like the old Hebrew seers?

Now, without stopping to inquire what were the special political and social troubles which provoked the Hebrew complaint of God's dealings (whether it be the results of wars which the people had not made, the hardships of captivity which they had not brought upon themselves, or whatever it may be), let us take the complaint with the reply, and say of the general truths that here appear in particular instances :—

(1) The Doctrine of Heredity is the greatest of Scientific Discoveries.

(2) The Doctrine of Grace is the greatest of Catholic Doctrines.

We couple the scientific discovery with the religious discovery; there is no necessary opposition between them, for Scientific truth and Catholic doctrine are near neighbours; all that is Scientific will one day be Catholic, and

conversely. The observation of laws of heredity is not inconsistent with the Doctrine of Divine Grace. Concerning this latter doctrine, indeed, the statement we have made is not our own, but that of the late M. Renan. It often happens that we learn from our enemies; and especially in the estimating of relative magnitudes the outsider will be found the best judge of proportion. Consequently we accept M. Renan's statement that the Doctrine of Grace is the greatest of Catholic doctrines, and set it side by side with the greatest thing that Science can say as to our birth and destiny. Every kind of analysis and every test of experience will verify the accuracy of M. Renan's dictum. So that on the one hand we have a statement to the effect that by the perpetuation of my parents I am what I am, and on the other the doctrine that by the grace of God I am what I am. And these two statements are not contradictory nor mutually exclusive.

How wonderfully the facts and laws of heredity are coming to light in all current discussions with regard to the body and the mind! We are all of us meeting with our past

in a thousand new and unexpected ways: it looks out upon us everywhere; where it used to be a mere matter of hair or eyes or speech, it is now in every curve of the body and in every mood of the mind. Not merely in times of special perplexity or intricate inquiry do we say to our friends—

> "Your face, my thane, is like a book where men
> May read strange matters";

but under all circumstances we are learning to find in their faces (and in our face also when seen from the reflecting surface of the world we live in) an open book, and that not a single volume, but a whole encyclopædia—a long row of volumes of historical information.

Family likeness is everywhere; we began perhaps by searching for it in the newly living or recently dead, after the manner described in the lines—

> "As sometimes in a dead man's face,
> To those who watch it, more and more
> A likeness unobserved before
> Comes out to some one of his race."

And we are learning now to record what we

see, not sometimes in a dead man's face, but every day in the faces of living men. Nor is it a single portrait that we recover, or the two or three immediate ancestors; but the resemblances make up a gallery of historical figures. They are not limited to the good or the great, for there are faces amongst them which we would gladly and for ever turn to the wall if we could. To put it in plain English, we all of us have not merely a long ancestry, but in part a criminal ancestry. The verification of that statement lies to some extent in the thoughts and intents of our own hearts. Science has joined hands with Christianity on the question of original sin, and the once popular doctrine of the soul as a clean white paper is gone for ever. It is doubtful whether we can any longer even take consolation in the thought that at any time in the world's history the soul's paper was white. If it ever were so, it was so far back that it could scarcely be identified as a soul; individuality would have disappeared before purity was discovered.

It is no doubt a great gain to have definitely rid ourselves of the absurd and impossible idea

that children are born good, and to have abandoned the idea that there is such a thing as starting fair in the race of life. It is one of the proofs that may be given of a statement made a little further back that the terms Scientific and Catholic tend to coincidence. But it does not diminish the seriousness of the problem; for the more clearly the conditions and laws of heredity are brought to light, the more hopeless are we likely to become both as regards our own moral welfare and as regards the character of God, which is involved in that moral welfare. It is natural, and not altogether unreasonable, to be discouraged when we find ourselves under the influence of a multitude of temptations of which the greater part belong to our ancestors, and perpetuating in innumerable habits the manners of life which they ought to have unlearned for us.

And small is the consolation which the man whose teeth are set on edge will take from being told that the grapes are not so sour as they used to be. We may optimistically encourage him to "move upward, working out the

beast, and let the ape and tiger die," and in some respects this is not unlike the Scripture advice to mortify our members which are on the earth; but if the man find not merely the ape and the tiger, but a whole menagerie of wild animals gathered under his own roof, he will suspect that, though they sometimes sleep, they show no signs of dying. While he lives, they live; for they are a part of himself. Of these inherited ills he will say what Faber says of self-life generally—

> "But I can scarcely hope, I fear, to kill thee,
> Save in the act of dying."

Nor even here, to a man who believes in a future life, is the consolation effectual; for even a life to come is not exempt from the influence of acquired characteristics. We may learn to hate on one continent, and carry our hatred with us when we emigrate to another. We are under a load of acquired characteristics in this life; and who shall say we may not groan under the burden of them in another? For although the corruptible body presseth down the soul, it is even more true that the corrupted

and corruptible soul is a burden to herself. Such a burden may subsist even in a disembodied condition.

It is precisely the painfulness of this question of inherited ill that makes the acceptableness of the doctrine of Divine Grace. There must be some way of condemning heredity in the flesh, in order that we may walk at large in the spirit. It is the sense of the prevalence of hereditary evil that makes us apprehend the greatness of the Catholic doctrine of Grace and the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For Grace is the antidote of Heredity, and can deal with a thousand years as easily as with a single day—can say of sin that the wind shall pass over it and it shall be gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. It can take the proverb of "sour grapes" out of our lips, because we shall have no more occasion to use it in Israel. It can provide that the man who stole shall steal no more, not merely by reiterating the commands of the Decalogue against theft, but by making him partaker of the life that does not steal. It can deal with inherited tendency as easily as with actual sin—can make hatred

cease by excess of love, and falsity shrivel before excess of truth.

The proverb about the sour grapes will always be used in Israel until we understand the Grace of God in Jesus Christ well enough to embrace it absolutely in its fulness as the sufficient medicine against heredity; and I have long thought that *if we have not a gospel against heredity, it is very doubtful whether we have any gospel at all.*

Now in studying the sweet grapes, which antidote the sour, we begin by the contemplation of the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as it existed in Himself personally. It is a fact which is often lost sight of, that our Lord was like ourselves in the matter of having a human heredity; and we cannot limit this heredity to the fact that His eyes were, according to the old legend, of the same colour as His mother's; there must have been other things which were also of the same colour. The Scriptures themselves teach us to study the genealogy of Jesus, by declaring Him to be of David's race, and affirming Him to be sprung out of Judah. And although we are not able to distinguish

clearly at what point the actual genealogy diverges from the two Joseph-genealogies given in Matthew and in Luke, we have every reason to believe that the line of the blessed Virgin's past history runs back upon a course not very different to those which are supposed in the Gospels. In other words, our Lord had a human line of descent which was, in all probability, similar in its features to the Book of Generations of the first chapter of Matthew. The Scripture expresses this fact in the words, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same." But while every one accepts this statement, it is but seldom that we appreciate what it means to be partaker of the flesh and blood of the children. Two tremendous facts start up before our mind: the first is that our Lord was like ourselves in the possession of criminal ancestry; the second is that, though His ancestors had eaten sour grapes, His teeth were not set on edge with them. For both of these statements—the first of which startles from the Catholic side our sense of reverence and arouses a feeling of something impious

having been spoken, and the second which from the Scientific side astonishes us by affirming that an unparalleled miracle has been wrought —there is abundant Scriptural evidence.

We are definitely taught to regard our Lord as sprung from a sinful ancestry: apart from the genealogies it would be sufficient to repeat only the names David and Judah; and with the genealogies a little examination seems to show that there is an emphasis on deadly sin in the record. But even if no mortal sins had been alluded to, every step in the genealogies (whatever the step was) is the record of a life of a sinful man who tended to transmit his own acquired characteristics and to perpetuate his own inherited tendencies. With supreme reverence, and with the overflowing of grateful love, we are entitled to say that the statement that our Lord partook of the flesh and blood of the children reduces His heredity and ours in some sense to a common classification. But we are further definitely taught that He was without sin, that He knew no sin, that guile was not found in His mouth, that He was without blemish and without spot. So that,

without entering into any perplexing questions as to the nature of Christ's sinlessness, we can see that He is in His own person the leading proof of the fulfilment of the prophecy that the influence of the sour grapes should not be eternal in Israel. I will not attempt to analyse how far this miracle is to be referred to the Incarnation and how far to the Obedience of Christ; it is sufficient for us to believe that by the Incarnation and the Obedience (and the Obedience according to the Scripture culminates in the Cross) the succession of sin in a direct line was made to cease: in His own person Grace reigned through righteousness unto glory. But by this time we are getting away from the sour grapes ourselves and beginning to gather sweet grapes. For this doctrine of Grace, this greatest of Catholic doctrines, teaches us not to regard our Lord as a childless man, but as One who stands in relation with ourselves so that we may repeat His life. Behold, He says, I and the children whom God has given Me.

If He took heredity, it is also true that He gives us His. We find out what vine the sweet grapes grow on, and are branches of it.

A communication of the Divine nature remedies our long line of ills, and the grace which was in Him appears as saving grace and sanctifying grace in ourselves. We begin to act as if our own genealogy commenced with the words "which was the Son of God"; and when we thus act the genealogy turns out to be true, for we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

X

A CORN OF WHEAT

X

A CORN OF WHEAT

THE teaching of the Bible is largely coloured by figures borrowed from a civilisation so much more elementary than our own that we are obliged sometimes to stop and ask ourselves the question whether, if Christ and His Apostles were to reappear in the twentieth century, they would talk in the same way as they did in the first. Would their thought be as exquisitely simple, and their language so charmingly agricultural and piscatorial, as we find in the Galilean story? or should we find, instead of the language of the farm and the vineyard, allusions to railway-trains and to machine-shops, to telephones and torpedoes? For we find that to-day, even in making the simplest religious and moral statements, the modern teacher is affected by the increasing complexity of the life around him, and his

speech is coloured by the enterprise, the industrial developments, and the speculations of the nineteenth century. To take the simplest possible case: the late Prof. Jowett told us that the value of a religious system consists in the *ethical dividend* that it pays—an elementary truth, and in a very modern habiliment; the people of old time would have said with Paul, "What fruit had ye?" or with the Lord would have announced that "every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit would be hewn down and burned up." But there is a change in the form of expression, if we correct the evangelical language and say that every company which does not pay a dividend will be wound up or pass into the hands of a receiver!

We admit freely that our Lord, if He preached in our day, might use language borrowed largely from our time; but it does not follow that the terms used would be any more forcible than the expressions which came out of the very heart of nature as well as out of the inmost thought of God. Should we believe Him any more if He said, "Behold, an investor went forth to invest," instead of "Behold, a sower

went forth to sow"? Would the illustration probably be longer-lived because it belonged to later days? To assume that would be to predict for our industrial and commercial life a permanence which is generally supposed not to be its leading characteristic. And I think we may be glad that the Bible is agriculturally rather than financially or mechanically illustrated, for there is a permanence about the processes of nature which makes illustrations, such as our Lord used, very suitable to accompany truths which do not pass away.

Has it ever occurred to any one to notice what a wide range Christ's teaching could take with the aid of a single illustration? How much could He tell of the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven over a fishing-net, or a farm-yard, or one solitary ear of corn or detached grain of wheat! We venture to say that the whole of Christ's most salient teaching could be done with a text plucked at random in a corn-field. Let us try and see some of the ways in which the statement just made can be verified.

We will begin with the lowest of the lessons

in the Christian scale—viz., the right to acquire and the duty to defend our personal and religious liberty. We trace all our good to Jesus Christ, whenever we see a rightly ordered state or look upon a well-saved soul. If Christ had not promulgated our liberties in His new charter, if priestcraft had not come under His lash, and the slave had not found the sealed orders of his emancipation amongst Christ's papers, we should have to answer John's question, "Are we to look for another?" in the affirmative. Christ cannot be all and in all until there is neither bond nor free. Nor have we the right to glory over the best steps of national progress, and remain Christians when we thus exult, unless we count Christ as the seed-corn of our harvest. It is perfectly in accordance with New Testament teaching to define liberty as the right to act without the intervention of a ruler and to think without the intervention of a priest. These ideas are the current coin of the kingdom, as well as the base metal of the agitator.

Now when our Lord would teach us these things, He went through the corn-fields on the

Sabbath, and His disciples plucked and ate. They did not know that they were plucking and eating emancipation, that the rubbing of their hands was the type of the whole friction of progress; but Christ knew it. And when the Pharisees would stop the impromptu breakfast, and put precedent and piety to the front, and proved to demonstration, no doubt, that it was a lesser kind of threshing forbidden on the holy day, He shook the ears of corn in their faces, and said that He was the Lord of the Sabbath. I wonder whether once in the thousand times when we decorate our churches with wheat-ears for harvest festivals we have any thought in our minds of the kind of sermon Christ preached off the simple texts which make our show? or whether we are so limited in our range of religious vision as not to know that the harvest is not exclusively the end of the world, nor those that reap it merely the angels? So much then may be said with regard to the priceless privileges of an advancing Christian civilisation from the text, "He went through the corn-fields on the Sabbath."

Turn now to the spiritual life, and let us fly

higher. Our consecration to God was taught us by Jesus Christ over a single grain of seed-corn ; the law of death to the self-life and of life in the spirit is written across the law of natural disintegration and reintegration of the corn of wheat that falls into the ground. To make a more exact statement, we ought to say, not the law of our consecration to God, but the law of His consecration. For the corn of wheat from which He preached was in the first instance His own life, and not ours. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." And the context shows that, in the first instance, He was speaking of His own actual death, and not merely of the mystical surrender of His will or of ours, but of the whole story of which the Incarnation is the prologue and the Resurrection the conclusion. Now it is true that our spiritual history is involved in that story, for to be a Christian is to have died with Christ and to be raised with Him ; but the lesson loses much of its force if we leave out the words "with Christ" and "with Him." For what special wonder is it if we acknowledge our own

limitations and confess our own nothingness? The propulsion to duty lies in the appreciation of Christ, not in the depreciation of ourselves; in the knowledge of heavenly love, not in the attainment of hatred of personal selfishness. And one of the things that move our affection Christwards is His unspeakable humility, and we shall not easily find a better illustration of the truth that He was meek and lowly in heart than in the fact of His comparing His life to a single corn of wheat, which any one might despise and nobody would miss. Such language is like a renewal of the Incarnation.

If we appreciate Christ when He thus discourses over His own body, and when He thus epitomises His own life, we ought not to find it so difficult to take the place of consecration ourselves, and to be planted with Him in the likeness of His death.

From the very same text He taught us the doctrine of our sanctification, by means of wheat that was thoroughly threshed and corn that was gathered in from a floor that was thoroughly purged. We observe that here He does not call Himself the corn, but the thresher; the

inference is that, while it was appropriate to see in Him the seed-corn of God, it was not appropriate to think of Him as a grain of wheat still in the chaff, when the lesson clearly is that the chaff stands for what is worthless and actually evil. For this reason He appears as the thresher, and not as the corn; and we are entitled to interpret all the imagery of the threshing-floor of ourselves and of the Church. God did not say concerning Christ, "I will thoroughly purge," but it was said of His people; the cleansing of the Vine is in the branches. But this really simplifies matters for us very much, because we are in no danger of wrongly transferring to ourselves a work of grace which might refer to Him, or to ourselves only in an ideal manner in Him. Whatever Pentecostal grace may be, or Pentecostal purity, it is all ours; nor need we have the slightest fear or suspicion that we shall detract anything from the glory of Christ by being as pure as He intends to make us. And personally it is a matter of great comfort to me that this thought of a God-wrought purity is put in the very forefront of the Gospel; so that if we

had nothing more than a leaf or two at the beginning of Matthew, or if we had only so much of John the Baptist's sermons as would make mere headlines for newspapers, we should know what it was that God was designing for us, and why Christ was come; and we should not err, we cannot err, in pushing to the front of our own religious thinking those very thoughts which belong to the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Much more might be said on the same subject, and in connection with it. It is probable that all the deepest teaching of the Bible, both of the Old and of the New Testaments, is characterised by the same leaning on the elementary facts and processes of nature. The graces of the redeemed life can all be expressed in the same alphabet; "every virtue we possess, and every conflict won," can be recorded in these simple forms of speech. What a magnificent praise of God behind the cloud and within the veil is contained, for instance, in that last chapter of Habakkuk! One wonders why it was never pushed back from the Prophets into a leading place in the Psalms.

Indeed it was so pushed back in the Greek Church, for they made it one of the nine canticles which they commonly write at the end of the Psalter. When we come to examine the terms of this beautiful song in the night, the most perfect expression of resignation to God and of deliverance from disappointment, we find the writer teaching us from fig trees that have not blossomed, and from olive trees whose labour has failed. We should not learn it any quicker if it had been expressed in the language of Consols or of Argentine Securities. These simple teachings of farm and field knock continually at the doors of our own blessedness, with intent that we may enter therein and find our home in the will of God, and our permanent lodging under the shadow of the Almighty.

XI

THE HOLY PATIENCE

"*My soul, wait thou only upon God;*
For my expectation is from Him."

PSALM lxii. 5.

XI

THE HOLY PATIENCE

AMONGST the virtues and graces which go to make up the saintly character, it is certain that Patience occupies a leading position, being, in its highest form (for we are not speaking of elementary attainments), a virtue so God-honouring and God-justifying, that it is set amongst the other ethical characteristics of the redeemed man as a chief corner-stone, being in the builded temple of the Christian life what Christ is in the temple of redeemed humanity.

If we were to be told that a book was shortly to appear, in which, from the standpoint of freshly acquired facts or more accurately combined doctrines, a perfect vindication of God's ways to men would be for the first time presented, and we were left to speculate about the character of the book in the interval between

the announcement of the book and its publication, how many things would immediately be suggested to our mind! One of the first would be that this was the book which all the best men had been wishing to write: for who is there that knows God at all that is unconcerned with the problem that Milton had in hand when he desired—

> "That to the height of this great argument
> I may assert eternal Providence
> And justify the ways of God to men"?

If this is the end and aim of poetry, every poet is a Christian, and every Christian, more or less, a poet. We hold, on this question, the faith and morals of Milton. And we have all of us the inward conviction that, forming, as we do, fragments of a world in which, from the microcosm to the macrocosm, the denial of God appears along with the affirmation of His being and of His love, and in which unbelief is always dogging the pioneer footsteps of Faith, there is none of us that is exempt from the study of the Divine Vindication. For God cannot be in the highest degree glorified until He is justified; and we should therefore feel

that, when the book of the Divine Justification is open to readers, the readers will be all that worthily bear the name of Believers. We should all read this book, at all events, the moment that it appears.

Another thought that would rise to our minds would be that it could hardly be a short book that was promised. It will be more interesting than the best novel ever written, yet we hardly expect it to come within the scope of three volumes. Our own perplexities require at least a page; and then there are our neighbours' troubles too, which have reacted upon the affirmation of God in the world, and made it more like a changing Yea-nay than the everlasting Yea. And even if we have never sinned nor charged God with folly, there must be a vindication of our Faith, as well as a condemnation of any possible or actual Unfaith, in the new book. Certainly it will be a large book, when the index shows our names and the names of those we know and love, along with the other factors that make up the travail of the world.

We should further consider that, inasmuch as

it is by the Church that the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known, the justification of God's ways will especially be brought out by throwing fresh light upon the great historical facts upon which the Christian religion reposes, and upon the great experiences, personal and collective, which men have had of the Grace of God in this life. It will not be a mere book of anthems arranged for the instruments of another world. Every word of it would indeed serve for the libretto of an oratorio, and a good part of it we shall sing, and at sight too, with an accompaniment upon our own strings. But it will be written in plain prose, and the librarian will catalogue it as Church History.

And the author's name—what can it be other than Patience? For, unless God write the book Himself, to which of the powers or virtues, celestial or terrestrial, could it be given, except only to this handmaid of the Lord, who can say of all the story of the Church of God—

"et quorum pars magna fui";

whose ceaseless occupation it has been to wait

for the consolation of Israel; who first made hope to be vocal in the soul of Isaiah, who fasted and prayed with Anna in her long widowhood, who was at the cross with the Blessed Mother, and at the grave with the Magdalene; who hired the room for the great Pentecostal Meeting, and sang "How long, O Lord, how long" under the great altar of the martyr sacrifices? She it is who will write the book (for it is Patience that justifies God), and some of the proof-sheets are already passing through the press.

But, leaving allegory and similitude, let us say in plain English that a God-inspired Expectation, a Holy Patience, has always been the mark of the true believer, at the most critical periods in the history of the Church and of the individual; and we propose to point out some of the ways in which this grace has been demonstrated to be the corner-stone of the Worship of God. We may show this, in the first instance, by illustrations drawn from the leading dispensations of the Grace of God to men, and we may confirm it from the observation of individual leadings and visitations, in

accordance with the general law that all dispensational experience of the Church becomes the individual experience of the child of God.

In the first place, then, remark that before the First Advent God had a waiting people whose faith was focussed upon the promises of the Advent. That such a band of waiting people really existed is sufficiently clear from hints that are let fall in the story of Simeon and Anna. The definition of Simeon as one who was expectant of the Comfort of Israel, and the allusion to the audiences of the prophetess Anna as being composed of those who were expectant of the redemption of Jerusalem, are sufficient intimations of the existence of an adventist movement in Jerusalem. Indeed, the terms are practically equivalent in the two passages quoted (Luke i. 25, 38). But if we equate "expectant of the consolation of Israel" with "expectant of the redemption of (or in) Jerusalem," we have practically recovered the formula of the religious movement to which Simeon and Anna and their friends belonged. And the leading virtue which is involved in this spiritual movement, without

which the movement itself could not exist, is evidently the Holy Patience.

Here, then, we have the nucleus of Christianity, the Church before the Christ, detached from the average Judaism of the day by the fact that they had larger hopes, a more assiduous communion with God, and special intimations of the Spirit concerning the things which God had laid up for them that loved Him. It would be called, nowadays, a new sect, and as such meet with prompt condemnation; but the sectarianism involved in a closer walk with God, and a better knowledge of His ways, has broad shoulders, and can bear some reproaches, without being bent too much out of the perpendicular. And certainly when the apparently sectarian movement becomes set to music in such terms as the *Nunc Dimittis* offers, and discourses of a "salvation prepared before the face of all people," and of "a light that was to be a revelation of the Gentiles" as well as "the glory of Thy people Israel," we can only say that the apparently sectarian movement is vastly wider than the Jewish Church, from which a larger hope has differentiated it.

There is nothing narrow about people that can sing in this way.

We shall understand the position of the First Adventists better, if we remove from our minds that common but unverifiable opinion that all the Jews in our Lord's day were indulging Messianic expectations. It is so far from being so that there were whole communities from which we get no evidence of such beliefs. Take, for example, Alexandria, the greatest of all Jewish colonies, and the nearest to Jerusalem. When our Lord came, the leading teacher of that great community, the greatest of all Jewish teachers outside the Christian movement, was Philo. So far from Philo indulging Messianic hopes himself or arousing them in other people, we find him to be definitely and positively an anti-adventist, at the very opposite pole to good Simeon and Anna. The utmost length that he will go in the indulging of national hopes is that there may be a return of the people to the Holy Land; but even with regard to this there will be no leader and commander of the people; they will be brought back by a Light, and even

this is an inward Light, visible to the people themselves, and invisible to others—that is, a light which might be a glory of God's people Israel, but in no sense was an apocalypse of the nations. It is very important to study these cross-currents and opposing centres in the Judaism of our Lord's time, and to reconstruct, as far as possible, the molecular groupings of the B.C. believers. If we could determine the characteristic beliefs of the great synagogues of those days, we should probably see reasons why the Church made more rapid progress in some centres than in others—why it was, for example, so rapid in Rome and so slow in Alexandria. And, at all events, we can see that the Adventists were right, and Philo (blessed man though he was) was wrong, and that it was better to have had a part in the most simple religious exercises of the waiting people in Jerusalem than to have imbibed the deepest wisdom of the man who wrote the tract *Who is the Heir of Things Divine?* For Christ did come, even though Philo expressed so decidedly an opinion to the contrary; and the Adventists saw Him first; while, as

far as we know, Philo never had the privilege of seeing the Salvation of God.

All of which is to me, at all events, peculiarly instructive; for it has a very practical bearing when we turn to our second consideration, which is that the Second Advent is the subject of the Holy Patience, exactly as the First was. Waiting and its correlative Watching are the distinctive marks of the Church of the last days, in so far as the Church of the last days is alive. In a certain sense it has always been the mark of the living Church: "Ye turned unto God from idols . . . to wait for His Son from heaven"; "To them that look for Him He shall appear, without sin, unto salvation"; "A crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give unto me in that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love His appearing." Is there no parallel between the case of people who to-day love His appearing, and of those who in earlier times were described as "waiting for the Comfort of Israel"? And if such a parallel does exist, will it not be important to ask whether our attitude on the question of the last

days is consonant with a just interpretation of the promises of Christ, and whether we may not lose, by an undue spiritualising of Scripture, just where we seem to find?—for the best mystical illumination is no substitute for a lost promise of Jesus Christ. Blessed are those servants whom their Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching.

The third point to be noticed is that the Holy Patience has to do with another great dispensational truth—the descent of the Holy Ghost. We have spoken of the organised expectancy for the Comfort of Israel: and the Comfort of Israel was Christ Incarnate—our first Comforter, as the Blessed Spirit is the other Comforter, in order that under no stage of the Christian Church's history should believers be orphans.

But it is just as true of the Descent of the Spirit as of the Incarnation that it was looked for by a nucleus of simple-minded people, to whom the promises of God and the spiritual intimations that they received were everything in the world. Nevertheless, it is true that even Pentecost has something about it which

looks like sectarianism. When they called the Church-roll on the great and notable day, there were many names missing that might have been expected, beside the name of Judas. One hundred and twenty Spirit-baptised persons is far short even of the five hundred brethren who are reported to have seen the Risen Christ upon one occasion; and how vastly short of the number of the names of those who had experienced His healing grace or, in one form or another, proved His saving power! One might almost use Christ's own words, and apply them to the praising people in the upper room: "Were there not ten cleansed? and where are the nine? There are not found that return and give God the glory, except this handful!" But this only shows that the Holy Patience, in which these souls tarry for their enduement of Divine Life and Power, is, as it were, an election within the election; and that here also many are called, but few chosen.

It is possible that, at the time of this great manifestation of God to the world, there may have been those amongst early disciples who had either ventured to disbelieve the promise

of the Father, or had falsely consoled themselves by a belief that the Church was already enjoying all that was meant by the Promise!

Last of all, when we turn from dispensational truth to personal experience, which is its mirror and reproduction, we find ourselves face to face with the promise of great and notable days for ourselves, as important to our lives as the coming of Christ to the world or the day of Pentecost to the Church—with blessings definite enough, if Scripture be not misleading, to awaken all desire and unite us all experimentally in the Holy Patience of which we have been speaking. "I will dwell in them and walk in them"; "He dwelleth with you and shall be in you"; "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple": and over every promised revelation of Christ to the soul, we take up the language which is natural to the last days, and say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

XII

THE DEATH-SONG

XII

THE DEATH-SONG

I HAVE a dear and gifted friend who, when she writes to me, seals her letters with the legend of the dying swan, "Moriens cano," "As I die I sing"; for, as you know, the last day of the wild swan's life is said to be set to music. It has often happened that the imagination has played sweetly false with natural history, and has supported both dogma and ethics on some statement which cannot be found in treatises on zoology. The early Christians, for example, found the doctrine of the Resurrection in the story of the phœnix; and some of them believed the "sole Arabian bird" to have been expressly designed by God for the preaching of a life to come. And something similar to this has happened in the case of the wild swan, which was supposed to become oracular

before its death, and is therefore the symbol for the most exalted hopes which man is privileged to indulge, as he looks over the verge of his narrow world into the broad world which God has laid up for them that love Him.

It is a figure which often meets us in literature; for instance, there is a noble passage in the *Phædo* of Plato, in which the dying Socrates is made to compare himself with the prophetic birds that are sacred to Apollo: "For they, when they perceive that they must die, having sung all their life long, *do then sing more than ever*, rejoicing in the thought that they are about to go away to the god whose ministers they are. For because they are sacred to Apollo they have the gift of prophecy, and anticipate the good things of another world; wherefore they sing and rejoice on that day more than ever they did before."[1]

And the student of the life of Tennyson (and the study of the life includes the memory of the death) will recall how favourite a figure this was to him. We find it in the most exquisite

[1] Plato's *Phædo*, 84 D.

of his early poems, *The Dying Swan*, in which he describes the way in which

> "The wild swan's death-note took the soul of that waste place
> With joy mingled with sorrow."

It appears again as the leading metaphor in *The Passing of Arthur*, whose exit is compared to the bird that,

> "fluting a wild carol ere her death,
> Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
> With swarthy webs."

And last of all, chiefest of all, it is the figure by which one naturally describes the best and greatest words which we associate with his memory, the song that predicted his own passing, as he crossed the bar, and knew his Pilot face to face. The wild swan will not drop out of literature, even though she may have, in the sense that poets praise her, dropped out of natural history. We have too deep-rooted a belief in the life to come to suppose that we are obliged to enter it as upon an absolutely foreign country. It must surely be possible, from some point of spiritual vantage,

to see the land from afar. Nor are the counsels of those upon whom the light of the City is already falling likely to be always feeble with the weakness of failing lips. And certainly it is not an ordinary thing for a person who has lived in Divine communion to "die, and give no sign"; for a holy life is always oracular with truth and electric with love; and why should it cease to be so because it has become renewedly conscious that the night is far spent, and the day is at hand?

Let us consider our Lord Jesus Christ. What a death-song was that which He sang to His disciples in the last hours of their outward companionship! We recognise how the note has changed in Christ's speech when we read the closing chapters of St. John's Gospel, say from the thirteenth to the seventeenth, and compare them either with the earlier discourses in the same Gospel, or with the fragments of His teaching in the other Gospels. How far we are now removed from the discussion of merely local issues, such as Sabbath-day healings, and the like! Instead of the relative superiority of Jerusalem or Samaria as places

of worship, we hear of a single flock, composed of those who believe, and of others who will believe through their word. We are past the point where it is discussed whether this or that Jewish feast is to be attended when the last great Passover has been reached, concerning which He said, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." All doubtful situations have disappeared from the life; and with the end in full view He fulfils the Scriptures written concerning Himself, and notes, as the last steps of the journey are taken, that these steps are fore-ordained, and that thus it must be. For the last time He has said, what was one of His characteristic words in the early ministry, that His hour was not yet come; for He now knows assuredly that the time is come when He is to be delivered into the hands of sinners, and when He is to return to the Father.

Accordingly when we read these chapters we hear in them the "awful jubilant voice" of the wild Swan; and some of the notes of this song, sung in sight of the City, will set us also singing, as if we shared the vision.

Let us examine some of the points at which we become partakers of the Lord's hope, and fulfillers of His saying, that all things which He had learned from the Father He had made known to His disciples.

First of all, think of the marvellous freedom from heart-care of which He spoke. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Believe in God and believe in Me." And as He said the words the care of the whole world was gathered upon His shoulders. He was already being crushed by the sin and the sorrow of the world; presently He will be forced by the sheer weight of them to His knees. Nor will He be able to rise again without the aid of an angelic ministry to strengthen Him. Yet in the midst of this burden, what boundless cheer! With the burden of the world there was involved the care of the Church. Over the general mass of believers He is saying, "I pray for them," and over the pressing needs of individuals, of whom Peter is the representative, He is saying, "I have prayed for thee." It is one of the astonishing characteristics of our Lord's last prayers that they exhibit such

freedom of choice in the subject concerning which request is made. We find by experiment that, even when we have attained to a measure of the grace of intercession, that immediate and pressing personal needs have a tendency to make friends forgotten at the Mercy-seat. We cannot always carry a heavier burden of petition than is evoked by our own circumstances and proper to our own day of trial. There is a want of spiritual elasticity about the inner life which often prevents us, under the stress of personal suffering, from responding to the needs of others. Yet in our Lord's last days and hours we recognise a wonderful buoyancy, which is not limited to the single statement, "I have overcome the world!" "Father, I will," is strangely alternated with "Not My will, but Thine." "Be of good cheer" falls from the same lips that will presently be saying "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." Granted that the waves of unutterable grief are breaking in succession against the beaten promontory of His perfect faith and changeless love, and that betrayal and denial are followed by the *fluctus decumana*, or tenth

wave, of a general desertion, we must also recognise the incoming of a tide of exultant joy (He calls it "My joy," as though it were some prize He had found in the waste places of this world); and this joy is prospective beyond the pain. It almost seems as if He were preparing to stand outside His own grave, and say, "Jesus, come forth," as He had done at the grave of Lazarus. He saw an unoccupied tomb beyond the sealed one, and an occupied throne in the place of the one that He had vacated. Depend upon it that such spiritual exultation, in which the spirit claimed its right to sing its own triumph, had its *fluctus decumana* as truly as the ocean of sorrow, and that its flood-mark was higher. Such freedom from care and such spiritual confidence is one of the characteristic notes of the true swan-song.

Secondly, as we have already intimated, our Swan sang of the life to come. And it is clear from the stray words of the song that have come down to us, that Jesus Christ regarded the next world with perfect naturalness. Two notes recur in this part of the music: one is the word "Home," and the other is the word

"A little while." Both of these words are within the compass of our own voices, and the scale of our own instruments. Our Lord said nothing about the life to come in these chapters that would provoke ideas of a spectacular character. No trumpets sound, no rapturous welcome is heard. For a moment we almost forget that the song is the jubilation of a conqueror. "The glory which I had with Thee" turns into the lowly language of "My Father's house"; and He Himself, as He turns and looks back upon His brethren whom He is leaving, says to them, "I shall be your courier in another world; I will prepare a place for you; and when you come I will open the door to receive you, as if I were the servant, and you the master, and as if I were still among you as the one that ministers." It is certain there is more true music in these simple statements than in the language of the highest coloured apocalypse. We can never be thankful enough to the Lord for having made the thought of the next life so contiguous to the fact of the life that now is, and for having revealed it so clearly as the prolongation

of the righteousness, peace, and joy in believing which we enjoy here and now. With this gratitude is also mingled the thankfulness for the words "Yet a little while." Without Christ these words are a passing bell; with Christ they are a chiming bell. He used them over Himself that we might learn to use them over ourselves. "A little while and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while and ye shall see Me." Any separation from Him would have seemed like an age to those to whom His presence, even in the outward, meant so much; but for the elect's sake the days were shortened until theyappeared as "a little while." And all separations are included in the same formula. He gave us in His own life an object-lesson in reunion. This we could not have learned from the grass that to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; nor from the daffodils that "haste away so soon," for they only proclaim "A little while and ye shall not see me." But we can learn it from the perfect flower of the triumphant life of the Christ that prepares to die, and knows that death will have only a moment's dominion

over Him. Is not this thought of the reunion of the life to come a part of the true swan-music?

But, in the next place, we may remember that a part of this last song was an action. You will find it in John xiii., where He washes the disciples' feet. It could not be done in words only, because it was not possible that words could leave an example; and without an example the doctrine inculcated would not have been believed. Compared to mere words, even good and holy words, a loving action is an orchestra to a shepherd's pipe. So He laid aside His garments (as if it were a mystery play of the Incarnation), and took on Him the form and the fashion of a servant (as He had done in the great humiliation), and went out of the world having left nothing menial in it, because He so successfully had taken the lowest place from first to last, and had in Himself made the humblest actions holy. Few things had so emphasised the gulf between Christ and His disciples as this loving action had done. When it was over they looked on His feet, and did not venture to wash them in

return. Not even the beloved John proposed to take up the towel which Jesus dropped. Nor did He urge such reciprocity upon them towards Himself, but said, "Do to one another the lowly thing which I have done to you." This was swan-music indeed—sphere-music apart from and beyond the incidental words which the situation provoked. It would have been a part of the great harmony if it had been done in silence.

Last of all, this death-song was a song of the victory of love over all ills. It is true that in this song faith, hope, and love all conspire to bear a part; but here also the rule is not broken that the greatest of these is love. The closing chapters of John are full of statements of the love of God to Christ, and the love of God in Christ; of love that is before the foundation of the world, and of love that will be unshaken when the foundations and pillars of the earth do tremble; of love that was in the beginning, continues with its own in the world, and is with them even to the end; of love that the Father had for the Son, and of the Son for the Father. And

when we have sounded a little in this mystery, we are told that the love of God to the believer is the same as the love wherewith He loved the Son; for, says Christ, "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." We see it in action, as He pours water, and in passion, as He sheds His life-blood. And we understand from Him that this single principle is an equivalent of every rule of good conduct, and fulfils all righteousness; that everything which God can be in man, or which He can do through man, shapes itself into this single and perfect syllable, the last great oracular word, the closing note of the great music of the Dying Swan.

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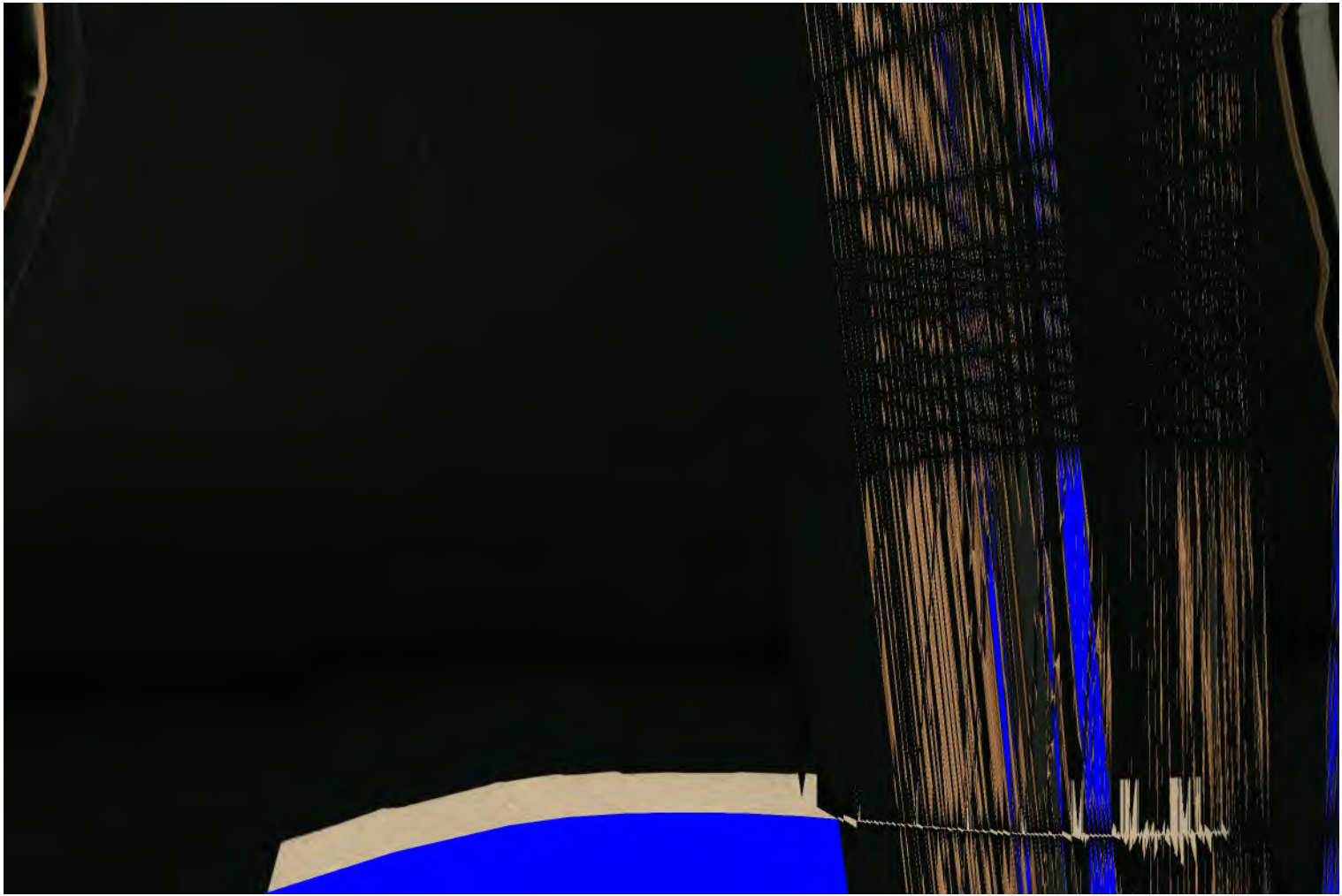
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